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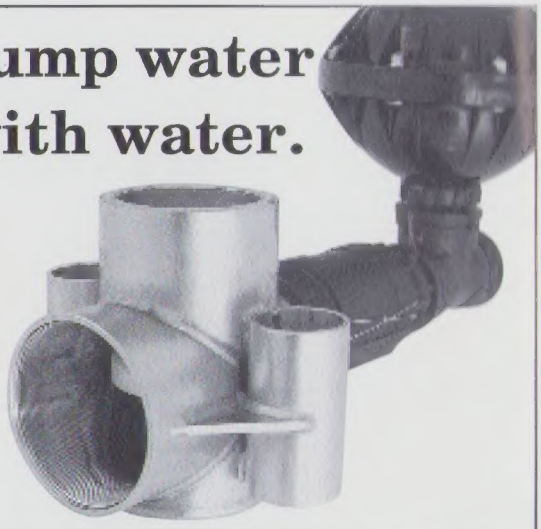

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Front Cover: WWOOFing is great fun, courtesy of *Queensland Country Life.*

Back Cover: Sunflowers, courtesy of Sharon Greenaway.

Edited by Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall.

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GUMNUT GOSSIP

by Megg Miller.

We've just enjoyed a delightful visit from Queenslander, Val Smetheram, who was driving past the office en route for a holiday in Tassie. We don't usually allocate time for socialising, especially around deadline as it's often so tight we only just meet our 'D' day. Sue had brokered a deal with Val and hubby Richard: 15 minutes and then she would see them to the door. Val makes interesting practical items, like simple fabric bags to take to the supermarket instead of using plastic, and she had a great bottle carrier with her that Suni thought would be perfect for keeping champagne cool. We're sure Val will share it with us; it looked simple enough for a noncrafty person to make, which was particularly appealing! It's a long drive from Queensland to Tassie and back, but we could tell this entertaining couple were enjoying every moment of it.

Their visit really lifted our spirits. Mary tore a muscle in her hip recently so has had to endure lots of pain and inactivity. We suspect the latter has been the most difficult to embrace. Not a week later Sue was nursing one of her hips, which was sending out sciatica signals. In between I'd had to retire to my bed for a day with a migraine. Honest, what's happened to our active, obedient bodies?

Luckily the youngsters, Suni and Sabrina, are not hampered by creaky joints and mutinous muscles. Sabrina has rejoined us for a couple of days each week now that Marcus is almost a year old. Morning tea discussions on Sabrina's days inevitably turn to babies and we cluck our way through everything from giving birth to whether TV is good for kids or not. Definitely makes a change from gardening gossip.

I don't know where my head was last issue but I completely forgot to mention our new GR cartoon, Kylie and Tyson. Lois Molina from central Victoria is the artist and she's captured totally the dilemmas and challenges Grass Rooters face. I'm sure Lois won't mind me saying that she isn't a spring chicken, but seasons aside, we think she's a clever chick. Look out for our intrepid, unstoppable, philosophically sound, envirofriendly couple and their kids in future issues. Well done Lois, we love our new GR 'family' and my apologies for not introducing them last issue.

One reason for the sombre office atmosphere prior to Val and Richard's visit is that we've had to be sympathetic about the sudden demise of one of my plump old sheep and also Suni and Marcie's cat Pablo from snakebite. The sheep was old so her sudden death wasn't unexpected, but it certainly put the wind up her companion, Dora, who acted as though pursued by the grim reaper for days. Fortunately, she's settled down and eating heartily again. Sheep are sensitive creatures you know.

Pablo we were all cut up about, he had visited the office a few times and was a most likeable cat. Clearly, he didn't read our article last issue on snakebite as he tackled a bad-tempered brown and came off second best. The day he was rushed to the vet Marcie stayed on at the office and, come lunchtime, I put forward the therapeutic value of comforting, greasy chips. Yes, Marcel would go and get them. On the odd occasion we get chips: a little $2 bag or a family box for about $4.50 that feeds us all. I handed Marcie $10, thinking Suni had issued instructions on what to get. Later that day I discovered a monster-sized box of cold chips in the tea room – heavens, Marcie had ordered $10 worth! When I told Mary about it a few weeks later she almost split her sides laughing. 'You think that's funny', said Suni, 'wait till you hear this. The chips came plastered with gravy and I had to go through the lot, the whole $10 worth, to get a full bowl of chips that weren't smeared with gravy for Megg, who can't eat it. By gosh, I burnt my fingers.' I think we're all off chips for awhile. So that's why they were rather soggy . . .

There won't be enough time over the next two months to try out everything in this issue. I've tried Vic's method for bottling tomatoes, albeit in a saucepan on the stove, and they look too good to open. Store your vegie harvest following Mary's advice, collect up old denim garments for quilt making when the evenings get cool and learn about windows for future renovations and save dollars. If you haven't got a haybox cooker, now is the time to make one. It's perfect for porridge. Who has time to be down in the mouth; open GR and, if you're not actually building or cooking or gardening, our writers will take you with them on their projects or journeys. Yep, GR is guaranteed to inspire and uplift, and it will last long after a bowl of hot, greasy chips has been eaten. That's real comfort.

Suni and Sue enjoy a visit from GR contributor Val Smetheram, centre.

Realising The Dream

by Deb Schmetzer, Buchan, Vic.

Dreaming of starting a hobby farm or moving to your block, but have no experience on the land? Well, WWOOFing might be just the thing for you.

Many of the strategies espoused in *Survival in the 21st Century*, a cult book in the 1960s and 1970s, are now becoming a reality for hundreds of people wanting to learn about alternative lifestyles, self-sufficiency and being close to nature. Whether you live in the city or are thinking of buying your slice of heaven in the bush, you can learn these skills through a program called Willing Workers on Organic Farms, commonly known around the world as WWOOF.

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

WWOOF was the brainchild of Lionel Pollard, who discovered the concept when visiting his home country of Britain in the late 1970s. At that time in the UK people could escape the city and volunteer their labour on host properties in a program called Willing Workers on the Weekends. Lionel perfected that idea in Australia, blending his interest and enthusiasm for organic farming and gardening with volunteering on host properties to promote the organic and sustainable farming movement that was becoming prevalent during the 1980s.

WWOOF Australia officially started in 1981 with a handful of organic hosts. Now the organisation has 1600 hosts and has developed into what can be described as a smorgasbord of alternative Australian lifestyles, the majority of which are in rural areas. Not only does program now include certified organic farms, but also a multitude of organically run hobby farms, bed and breakfast establishments, wildlife sanctuaries, wilderness retreats, intentional communities and small blocks of land requiring help from willing volunteers.

The WWOOF program is essentially about volunteering labour in exchange for all food and accommodation and cultural exchange while promoting sustainable agriculture.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

The great thing about the WWOOF program is the hands-on experience participants acquire in a range of skills, including learning about alternative technologies. As a potential

WWOOFer you should be willing and able to work with the host and family, to participate in an enthusiastic way. You will be asked to do a wide variety of tasks that range from general farm chores to vegetable and herb gardening. Jobs might include seed propagation, sowing, planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, composting, watering, pruning and mowing; animal husbandry; tree planting; bush, river bank and rainforest regeneration; building projects such as mudbrick, strawbale or cob; solar system set-ups; tractor driving; cattle mustering; irrigation; fencing – the list is endless. Often there can be household chores such as helping to prepare the meals and washing up. You can gain experience in all aspects of organic, biodynamic or permaculture techniques if that is what you are looking for.

More Than Organics

Anyone who is contemplating a sea change can join WWOOF and be free to explore the many options over and above the organic farming and gardening aspects in areas such as health, healing and personal growth and development. We have hosts interested in woodworking, sculpture, furniture making, arts and crafts, aromatherapy, yoga and meditation, music and musical instruments, theatre, cheese making, wine making, taking care of orphaned native wildlife and much more.

Fun Stuff

Then there is the fun stuff, such as designing a mosaic pathway, making a herb mandala garden, perhaps horseriding, bushwalking, snorkelling, swimming, visiting the local attractions and meeting the townsfolk, or attending festivals and musical events.

Try Out The Lifestyle

WWOOF is perfect for those who are thinking of buying a country property but do not know where. Joining WWOOF allows them to go from host to host in their own timeframe to discover those gorgeous little country towns and valleys and experience the people who live there, without a huge monetary investment on their part. Or WWOOF can be the perfect vehicle for those who have already purchased their property and want to learn how to develop it using permaculture and organic methods.

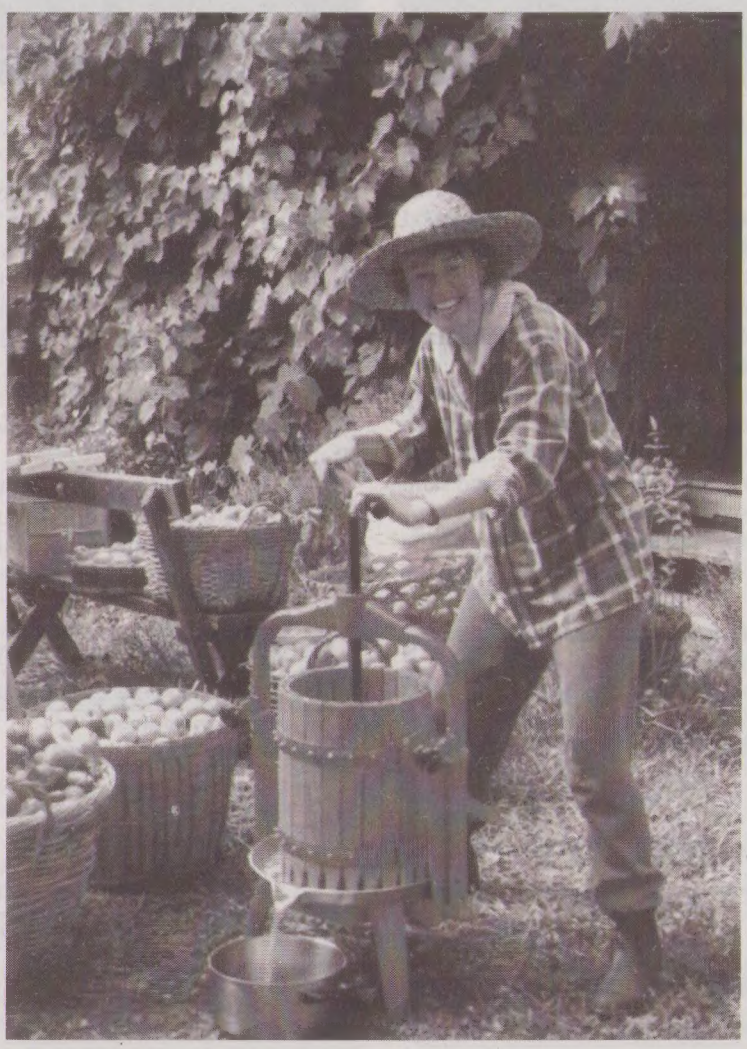
The WWOOF program is very suitable for young high school graduates or university students who may not yet have decided what they really want to do in life or how to achieve it. The WWOOF program allows them to discover the unique variety of what makes up rural Australia and how it differs from city life. It can broaden their horizons and increase their confidence in life skills, communication skills and awareness of lifestyles other than their own.

Skill Sharing

A new trend now emerging is that of mature-age people wanting to travel around Australia and share their knowledge with others. People in their 50s and older are joining WWOOF and visiting host properties. These senior citizens might have skills in building, horticulture, teaching and other talents to bring to the hosts while seeing parts of Australia they never knew existed.

LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCES

The reports we get from both WWOOFers and hosts tell the real tales. One German WWOOFer wrote to say that she came to Australia to see a kangaroo. She ended up staying with a host who was sensitive to chemicals. This WWOOFer had no concept of what it was like to be chemically sensitive and found it difficult at first to abandon her perfumed products. After a while without them she grew to understand fully the negative effects



Liane finishes a rock wall.

The boys show off their tree moving skills.

chemicals can have. She returned to Germany and studied environmental chemistry and has claimed in her letter to us that the WWOOFing experience changed her life. She now leads a local campaign to ban the use of harmful chemicals in the environment.

A letter we received from a young Australian explained how he learnt to appreciate other people's views, as his own family life was sheltered and repressed. Once he overcame his shyness and was made to feel part of the host's family, he opened up to new ideas and became a different person. He wrote: 'It's all about effective communication – being open and honest about your feelings and not being afraid to express yourself. At first this was not easy for me, but in time I learnt how free I could become. And the bonus for me was learning how to grow my own food. I felt empowered in so many ways!'

As a WWOOFer you will meet people from all over the world. You will become familiar with other cultures while staying on host properties, sharing your culture and making friends to visit overseas. There is a worldwide WWOOF program as well, enabling you to go WWOOFing around the globe. The WWOOFing movement networks people with ideas, philosophies and cultures; it opens up exciting possibilities and is definitely an education in living.

See what WWOOF has to offer by visiting our website: www.wwoof.com.au or contact us on: 03-5155-0218 Email: wwoof@wwoof.com.au

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THE ASTONISHING *Gotu Cola*

by Bob Rankin, Apia, Samoa.

I never cease to be amazed at how much knowledge of a beneficial nature lies out there waiting to be discovered. One of the reasons for this is that people just never think to pass on information that seems to them to be basic. I remember going to the doctor some 15 years about a knee that was giving me quite a bit of pain and severely restricting my tennis. He stretched and twisted my leg and soon found the trouble. 'It's not your knee. It's your hip. You probably need a hip replacement.'

The surgeon nodded when I told him I played a lot of tennis. 'Oh yes', he said. 'This happens to many tennis players and sportsmen who run around a lot.'

I wondered then why I, and thousands of others, hadn't been told about this before.

A similar situation arose with regard to zinc. Up till the time I was 70 I was constantly plagued by colds and the flu. If a bug was around, I would be sure to catch it and be in bed for days. Then I read an account in a health magazine of an 80-year-old who reckoned that 10 years previously he'd started taking a zinc tablet every day and this was the best thing he had ever done for his health. He hadn't had a cold since, his skin cancers had disappeared and his sight had improved.

I followed his example and in the last eight years have caught only two colds, neither of which were any near as severe as those that plagued me before. Why didn't I know about this sooner?

A recent experience caused me to think once more about knowledge not being passed on. How about an easily grown herb proven beyond doubt to reduce fatigue and calm the body and mind, improve memory and intelligence, purify the blood and increase longevity? It is also good for treating colds and flu, tonsillitis, indigestion, urinary tract infections, asthma and hypertension, among a host of other ailments. There is such a herb and it is gotu cola.

I had never heard of this amazing plant until I had a visit recently from an old army mate from 50 years ago. He brought with him a punnet of three seedlings of a small round-leafed herb. 'It's gotu cola', Keith told me. 'I've got it growing in my backyard and chew two leaves of it every day and have never felt better. It's a real wonder plant. There's a bloke in China who is 126 years old and he reckons he's reached that age because every day he drinks tea made of gotu cola.'

He told me the plant was small and liked to creep along the verge of his brick path. Like many herbs, it could grow in poor soil and needed little attention.

I immediately looked it up on the internet and was astonished when, for something I had never heard of, Google came up with 26,000 entries! I opened as many of these as I could and, sure enough, this herb was reported to do everything Keith said it did and more.

That evening I planted the three seedlings around the edge of my garden and they are thriving. It won't be long before I'll be another old bloke chewing two leaves of gotu cola a day and aiming to reach that grand old age of 126.

For more information about gotu cola (*Centella asiatica*), also known as pennywort, see GR 102.

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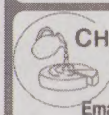

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Opening Boxes In Paradise

by Toni Gurren, Paradise, Tas.

There's more to self-sufficiency than the practicalities. Toni Gurren discovered the importance of the inner journey and shares some hard-won advice about baggage.

Some time after our move to rural Tasmania my husband and I finally noticed a few unpacked 'boxes', which until then had managed to keep themselves hidden. Various crises, however, caused them to nudge their way into our line of vision until they were sitting in front of us in full view, too high to step over, demanding we either blast them out of existence or open them and deal with the contents. These boxes, of course, held the ghosts of our pasts.

These ghosts needed to be exorcised if we were to have any chance of being successful in this new phase of our lives. I want to share with you a little of what we found out about some of our particular ghosts, and how we dealt with them. Perhaps you might find our strategies applicable to your own situation.

Being weighed down by unwanted baggage seems normal as we go through life, but we found that when we moved to our little piece of paradise, hoping to live outside the system to some extent, it was crucial to open the suitcase and deal with that baggage.

Living outside the system can include becoming independent of supermarkets, doctors and their drugs, old friendship networks and mummies and daddies, so it can mean adopting much greater personal responsibility and living with correspondingly greater insecurity. It not only involves learning how to be independent of some of society's infrastructure, such as tap water and rubbish collection, but also how to live with the isolation and fear that such independence can sometimes bring. It means not just enjoying harvesting your own vegetables, but learning to accept the realities of the planet. You want organic? Then you'd better get out there in all weathers and deal with all problems, most of them new to you despite your experience with your suburban garden. You got the stamina for this? Well you'd better get it, and get it fast. You want peace and quiet? Then you'd better learn to enjoy your own company. Quick smart.

We moved to Tasmania in December 1999 and rented a run-down house in a small town for three months while travelling much of the north of the state in our search for a suitable property. The rental property reminded us of all that is good, and bad, about suburbia: fantastic, like-minded neighbours on one side, noisy neighbours-from-Hades on the other. (Fate was reminding us to buy a property with no close neighbours.)

Walks around town, down to the stream to check for platypus, and to the post office to check our box every evening, made us glad to be in Tasmania. The people were friendly, the views were spectacular, the air was fresh. Yes! We've done it! we thought. A bit prematurely, mind you, given that we hadn't even found a property to buy at that stage.

Like most property purchases, ours was fraught with angst. But it did eventually happen, we did eventually move in, and we did eventually sit on our huge pile of boxes, over-awed, over-excited and stressed out of our little minds. We of suburbia, we of four-walls-and-a-desk jobs, we of middle age with miscellaneous infirmities, had purchased a house on 38 acres. Thirty-eight acres of weed-infested hillside, every step taken feeling like training for a walk to Everest Base Camp. Our house was not the cute, wooden, 'character' house so beloved of interstate buyers, but a brick veneer, flat-roofed, wall-papered-from-end-to-end nonentity. With a mouse plague thrown in for free.

What were our ghosts? Some of the main ones were fear, insecurity, health bombs, self-doubt, loneliness. I remember at one point, after about three months of living on our moderately isolated piece of paradise, puffing up the hill to where my husband was working, tears streaming down my face. 'What's the matter?' he asked, concerned. 'What', I gasped, 'what will I do if you die?'. We were, you see, living in free

fall. No friends, no jobs, no family, no gushing neighbours calling in inviting us for a cuppa, no local knowledge – we didn't even know where the nearest hospital was located. And perhaps worst of all, no experience of matters rural and agricultural. This was a culture shock I had never expected.

The root of our problem, though, lay not in these particular circumstances. It was the way we responded to them. We responded in our familiar way – tucked our heads in, worked like crazy and tried to acquire hundreds of new skills in a short period of time, becoming excessively lonely in the process.

We had savings to support ourselves for some years, so did not seek the off-farm employment that might have soothed some of the dreadful isolation we were suffering. Every week we scoured the local paper for clubs or organisations we could relate to. Nothing. We had no young children, so playgroups were out, we did not knit or play golf, football or lawn bowls. We were not church-goers. There were clubs in the north of the state of some interest, but nothing local. So we went back to working hard and stressing out like there was no tomorrow. We worried about weeds, about the cattle getting through the run-down fences, about our finances, our future, the roof lifting off the house in the spring gales, about bushfires in the summer.

Every day brought new decisions and new worries. It was difficult to see through all this to the beauty that surrounded us, though we did try to stop and appreciate it. Deep down, though, it seemed almost impossible to take in our good fortune to be living in one of the most peaceful corners of the earth.

Before the first year was out my husband's father, still living back in Western Australia, became terminally ill. Our loneliness and worries were now overlaid by a deep sadness. More stressing out. Before the second year was out I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Now I really had something to worry about. But the cancer proved to be a gift, as I was jolted into seeing life in a different way entirely and took up the challenge of learning to respond differently to life's events. At last I was going to tackle the lessons that would have been the most useful to have learnt before we departed for our piece of paradise.

To do this I needed help, so I began regular counselling sessions. I needed to help myself too, so I took up meditation. I needed to know more about realms other than the physical, the practical, so I took up reading about matters of the spirit. I made the effort to become socially involved, made contact with some wonderful GR folk, went to TAFE courses, joined a club, challenged myself. I realised that I had used the fact of having to drive, sometimes for up to an hour, to attend some of these activities as an excuse. Now the driving was simply a hurdle, something to overcome. And, surprise surprise, I was getting good at overcoming hurdles.

Two and a half years on from the diagnosis I felt myself to be a different person. The problem was no longer loneliness, but how to cull some of my social activities so I didn't overburden myself. The problem was not so much worrying about weeds, but how to work up enough interest in weeds to get out there and put in the necessary time each spring. The problem was not how to find the time or inclination to go outside simply for the pleasure of enjoying our wonderful landscape, but how to knuckle down and get to work.

Three years into our little piece of paradise we received our third blow, the death of my husband's mother after a very sad period in her life. But new life skills had made even this deeply saddening event seem like a necessary part of the rich fabric that is our lives.

So, we come to four years on and what lessons have we learnt? The biggest and most fundamental one by far is that when you move to your rural dream, to your Grass Roots dream, you actually take yourself with you. Prone to loneliness? You'll be lonely in paradise. Prone to worry? You'll worry yourself sick (literally) in a new and demanding environment. And so forth.

Without wishing to seem patronising, for I fully acknowledge that I have barely begun on the path to self-awareness, it seems to me that we all spend a lot of time and put a lot of effort into learning the practicalities of the self-sufficiency lifestyle: growing and processing food, building houses and other structures, caring for animals, discovering alternative remedies, keeping craft skills alive. But the transition from a supported and secure city or town environment to the free fall, independent rural environment is more than a practical journey. The real journey, the really satisfying journey, and the one that in the long run matters the most, is the inner journey we undertake. I believe that all of us, when we search for our little piece of paradise, are in fact searching for an environment that will more ably support us on that inner journey. Perhaps then, the thing that will most help ease some of the shock when you move to your piece of paradise is to remain fully aware that you are undertaking a journey on more than one level. There will then be few surprises in store when you notice those unopened boxes sitting not-so-innocently in the corner of your new home.

I would enjoy hearing of your own experiences, or your thoughts on what I have written, and can be contacted at tonig@tassie.net.au

Glass With Care

by John Mount, Mt Mee, Qld.

It might come as a surprise to some to learn that Cinderella, when she went to the ball, did not wear glass slippers. Apparently, when the story was first translated, the translator mistook the word 'vair' (sable) for 'verre' (glass). The fairy godmother chose sable because it was only worn by royalty.

There are a few misunderstandings about glass. For example, contrary to popular belief, you don't really cut glass with a glass cutter. You simply score or etch the surface in order to lessen the surface tension, then you break along the score line. So it's not necessary to press hard or go over the score mark a second time with a glass 'cutter'.

Glass needs to be handled with care both for its own safety and that of the handler. Ever had to remove a broken bulb from a light fitting and hoped the glass shards wouldn't penetrate the glove you're wearing? Try this. Firstly, and most importantly, switch off the power. Secondly, don a thick glove and, with a pair of pliers and a bowl or large container handy, remove every piece of glass from the broken bulb. Then, if there is a threaded plastic retainer above the bulb, remove this and, with your gloved hand and a piece of rag, turn or unscrew the bulb base. Most fittings are bayonet type while a few in fridges and ovens are the screw type. If you need to store good light bulbs without their protective cartons, use old socks or wrap them in pieces of cloth.

To pick up tiny slivers of glass from the floor use a damp piece of soap or wet cotton wool, or place a stocking or other porous cloth over the suction end of a vacuum cleaner. This is also a good method for finding little objects such as tiny spectacle bolts.

To prove that toothpaste has abrasive powers, rub a little on shallow scratches on glass then polish off with a soft clean cloth. For deeper scratches rub vigorously with a strong, thick, commercial brass polish. Rub with a rotary motion for about 10 minutes, finally rinse off and polish.

To clean vases, decanters or narrow-necked glass bottles try dropping a spoonful or two of raw rice (or sand if rice doesn't work) and warm soapy water into the container and shaking. Repeat if necessary, and then rinse. Discoloured and stained containers can be cleaned using a solution of vinegar and water, one teaspoon of vinegar to half a litre of water. Milk-stained bottles should be soaked in cold water first to dissolve the protein, which sets hard in hot water. Glass containers that previously contained strong-smelling substances can be cleaned by using a solution of one teaspoon of dry mustard to three litres of water.

SILICA AND RUST

Hang on to those small bags of silica that come with photo equipment, vitamins etc, as they can be used to protect tools from rusting. Simply place a bag or two in a tool box, but not in direct contact with the tools themselves. Place the bags in a low oven to reactivate them when the crystals change colour as they have absorbed all the moisture they can hold.

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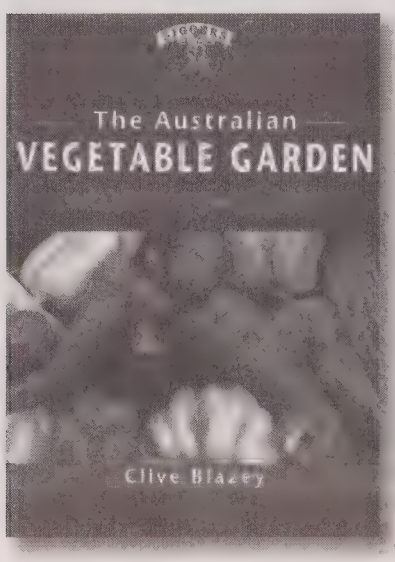

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Permaculture Garden
For Chooks

by Dorothy Creevey, Old Bonalbo, NSW.

No ecosystem is complete without animals and this is particularly relevant to a permaculture system. One of the animals that fits best within a garden situation is the humble chook.

Permaculturists design self-forage systems for all animals to provide for their needs as naturally as possible while reducing the environmental impact, human labour and costs involved with animal husbandry.

POULTRY PEST CONTROLLERS

Before introducing animals we do an analysis to discover what they can do for us, and what we can and must do for them. As well as the usual eggs, meat and feathers, chooks have other benefits to offer if we take advantage of their natural characteristics.

Their ancestors' natural habitat was the jungle, where they scratched about in dry litter foraging for insects and fallen fruit. This instinctive behaviour makes chooks ideal for eating garden pests and foraging for fallen fruit in the orchard.

POULTRY COMPOSTERS

Why, then, do we waste our energy turning compost when chooks love to scratch and turn ground litter? I simply add garden litter, kitchen waste, sawdust and paper continually to the coop's dirt floor and the chooks eat what they like and shred anything left. I find adding carbon in the form of sawdust or paper is necessary to keep the coop dry. For the paper component I simply throw entire newspapers into the coop and the poultry quickly shred them. Although this type of compost doesn't heat up as much as a carefully managed one, and it may take much longer to mature, I find the saving of my time and labour more than compensates for this. When I need compost, I simply rake away the loose top mulch to access the mature brew underneath.

JUNGLE BIRDS

Instead of the commonly seen moonscape of chook runs, the run should resemble a jungle. In a large garden the fact that birds do scratch an area clean if confined makes them ideal to patrol a fenced boundary area, such as between garden and orchard, to keep weed species from invading the garden or to keep a firebreak clear. If given access to any windbreaks within a reasonable distance of the coop, poultry can also take advantage of wind-borne seeds and pests that drop in.

Predator Protection

To provide weather and predator protection for your flock, remember that in jungles the vegetation does both. To re-create this environment, start by taking advantage of vertical space and plant vines such as choko, passionfruit or kiwi fruit on the coop (good insulation) and fence. For a low windbreak and visual barrier dense plants such as lemon grass and arrowroot could be planted around fencelines.

Thorny and prickly shrubs can help protect chicks from predators like hawks. In addition, a jungle-like planting will make it difficult for predator birds to see chicks.

Plants For The Jungle

Some plants that could be used to create this jungle, and provide food as well, are mulberry, Chinese raisin tree, pigeon pea, tagasaste, *Acacia floribunda*, loquat and fig. The chook run could also be the best place to plant useful trees that cause problems elsewhere; plants like elder that sucker, for example, or fruit-fly prone trees so the chooks can eat dropped fruit and scratch out over-wintering pupae. Or perhaps plant citrus trees, which prefer good airflow underneath and high amounts of nitrogen, though their shallow roots will need to be protected by rocks or wire netting placed on the ground.

Self-medication and consumption of greens can be encouraged by planting herbs and weeds such as chives, comfrey, clover, chicory, chickweed, dandelion, lucerne, wormwood, parsley, nasturtium, silverbeet, young grass, garlic (also add to drinking water), mints, oxalis, stinging nettles and cleavers in low, wire-caged plots or inside the wire guards protecting young trees.

Plant Protection

Obviously, permanent plants in the chook yard will need protection. I have found the most successful way to do this is to put a tree guard of chicken wire around any plants. Chooks can then feed from what grows through the netting or from seed and fruit that falls or is picked for them. Remember that these plants will need a suitable watering system.

CHOOKS NEED GRAINS

Even though they are obtaining food from foraging, each chook still needs every day about two handfuls of grain such as corn, millet, wheat, buckwheat, oats, beans, peas or pigeon peas. If you have the space, it might be possible to provide some of these by having them planted in two alternating runs where the chooks can self-feed in season or when you are away.

Grains To Grow

Many grains and seed foods can be collected and stored for the winter months when feed is thin on the ground. These include acorns, sunflower seeds, corn, tagasaste seeds, buckwheat, amaranth, acacia seeds, pigeon pea, salt bush seeds and carob pods. Soaking grain foods overnight is a good idea and less will be wasted. Sprouting grains is even less wasteful and more nutritious.

PROTEIN AND MINERALS

Protein is another necessary and important addition and may increase egg laying. It can come in the form of sour milk or yoghurt (not fresh as they don't digest lactose well), household scraps if permitted to be fed in your state (excluding citrus peels, onion skins, coffee and tea grounds), worms from the worm farm, grubs, insects and nuts. A termite and slater trap can be constructed by arranging old logs in the enclosure and turning them over occasionally for a chicken party. Rolled-up newspapers placed in trees and shrubs in the evening can be shaken out the next morning into the enclosure for a chicken feast. If you can't stand an untidy chook run or coop, you could place the cleaned out litter into a nearby worm bed, where it will be turned into an occasional worm feast for the chooks and high-quality fertiliser for the garden.

Minerals are also a must, especially for caged chooks, and can be provided with dried crushed eggshells, grit, bonemeal, cinders or crushed oyster shell.

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SAVE ON ROOF GUTTERS

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

Anyone building their own house has probably found that roof guttering is very expensive. When building a house or shed in the bush, you can use alternative materials and no one ridicules you about it; in fact, people are more likely to compliment your resourcefulness.

A cheap alternative roof guttering is round PVC pipe. Choose a diameter suited to the rainfall of your area; high rainfall needs big gutters and downpipes to cope. Cut the PVC pipe in half lengthwise. A simple jig will hold the pipe and guide your electric saw, or use a sawbench or jigsaw.

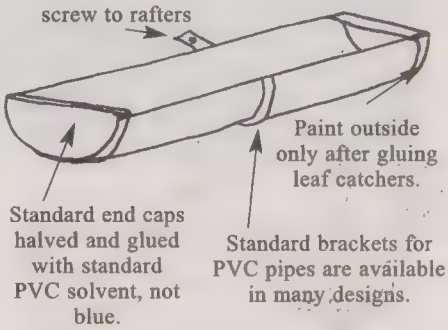
Use standard PVC end caps (cut in half) and standard pipe brackets to support the gutters. For the downpipe a tee or elbow of the size you need will channel the rainwater into your water tank. Some flyscreen glued over the gutter will ensure that leaves won't clog your rainwater catchment or become a fire hazard. Use clear PVC solvent for gluing, not blue, which could contaminate your water supply.

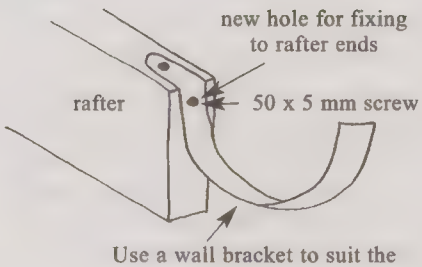
PVC doesn't rust out, but must be painted when used externally because the sun's ultraviolet rays will cause it to break down over time. Use about three coats of acrylic paint for durability.

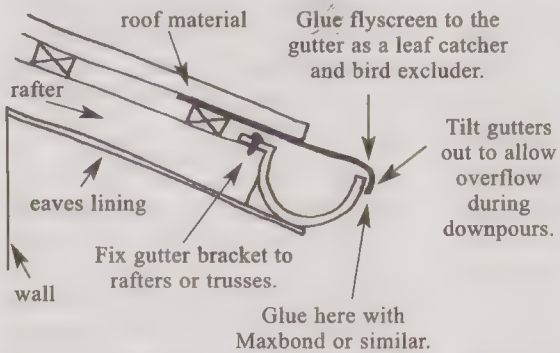
If retrofitting these halved PVC pipe gutters, it might be impossible to secure the gutter brackets in the usual way. You can drill the brackets in a place where you can access a screw and screwdriver.

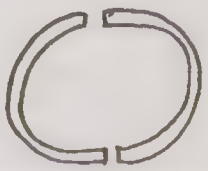
There are several designs of wall brackets, so choose the strongest metal one, galvanised if near the coast, as there is a lot of weight to support when the pipes are full of water.

Because you halve the pipe when using this cheap method, you only need half the total length of pipe, which makes the job even cheaper. Do shop around, though, prices always vary.


screw to rafters
Paint outside only after gluing leaf catchers.
Standard end caps halved and glued with standard PVC solvent, not blue.
Standard brackets for PVC pipes are available in many designs.




roof material
Glue flyscreen to the gutter as a leaf catcher and bird excluder.
rafter
Tilt gutters out to allow overflow during downpours.
eaves lining
Fix gutter bracket to rafters or trusses.
wall
Glue here with Maxbond or similar.


2 gutters from one pipe length

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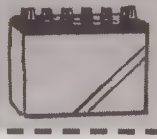

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SMART AS PAINT

Everyone knows you don't put paint in the garbage or, worse, down drains where it can get into waterways, but to help drive the message home, a trial is being held in Bayswater Bunnings Warehouse where householders can drop off old paint tins free of charge at the store for recycling. Called Paintback, the initiative is sponsored by the paint and steel packaging industries, state government and Bunnings. Drop into your own local hardware store and encourage them to get on board. For info on recycling and disposing of other household chemicals try EcoRecycle Victoria 1800-353-233.

A COUNTRY SEA CHANGE

There are constantly articles and letters in *Grass Roots* from people who are considering making, or who have made, a move from the city to the country. Greater self-sufficiency, more natural living and a quieter lifestyle are often the goals. Considering that Australia has a net population flow from the country to the coast and the major cities, any flow in the opposite direction helps to counteract urban sprawl.

This is my story of a move from the city to a hobby farm. Perhaps the yearning began when I was a boy. I grew up on a cattle station until I was in my early teens, when the whole family moved to a coastal city. I remained in cities until my retirement from a white-collar job in Brisbane and a home in its suburbs. The stirrings to return to a rural environment had begun a decade before retirement. Maybe you can take the boy from the bush, but not the bush from the man.

In spite of my early country experience, my wife and I had a lot to learn about hobby farming. I started reading self-sufficiency magazines and books on animal husbandry and silviculture, going for drives in the country to find areas that might be suitable, studying the cattle breeds in Australia and visiting our country relatives.

A HOME IN THE COUNTRY

A few months before retirement, we started looking seriously for a place in the country. We had a good idea of what we were looking for and the area we wanted to settle. We drew up a checklist for our search. After a short stint elsewhere a few kilometres away, we settled into our present property of 40 hectares some 65 kilometres from Brisbane. The property included a house, two rainwater tanks, a shed-cum-garage, cattle yards, four small dams, four paddocks and a bitumen road frontage, and is surrounded by other hobby farms, dairies and studs.

We had been determined to find a property with permanent, reliable stock water. Good water was probably our most important selection criteria. This property is connected to a community rural water supply. Water from the local river is filtered, but not chlorinated, reticulated to several hundred properties, and used for agriculture and gardening, but not for human consumption.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

On taking up residence, we immediately began discussing a development program for the first couple of years. While each place will have different requirements, our capital improvements have been a cow shed and a chook house (built at the same time to get some economy of scale), development of a large garden using rocks and cow manure from the property, a plantation of some 500 trees (80 fruit, nut and bush tucker trees, 120 timber trees, and some edible bamboo, with the balance as a house windbreak and amenity planting) with permanent fencing around it to keep out our cattle, a bitumen drive to the house (an expensive 120 metres, but eliminating a dust problem and doing away with the need to carry out constant repairs to a gravel driveway), and renewal of the rural water pipes.

We also felt it important to have what might be called a social plan for some degree of integration into the neighbourhood and local community. This has two main aspects. The first aspect was meeting the neighbours, visiting them, exchanging plants and produce, seeing how they run their operations and seeking their advice, and the second was joining a community group.

AFTER THREE YEARS

The lifestyle is certainly much quieter – no traffic noise, no sirens in the night, no shrill alarms, no party noise and no barking dogs nearby. The most consistent sound now is that of birds and the bellowing of cattle. We have space to do our own thing, without being too close to the neighbours. Cities now appear as crowded and noisy places to us!

Community Involvement

We have achieved some degree of integration into the local community. The neighbours are friendly, caring and very helpful. I joined the local show

society. It is one of the largest community groups in the area and provides plenty of opportunity to attend meetings, meet locals and join in its activities, including the annual show.

Livestock

Our level of self-sufficiency is increasing. Our two dairy cows (a Jersey and a Friesian) provide plenty of milk, at least for the first six to eight months of their lactation. The cowshed we built is a typical one for home milking and has two sections; one to lock up the calf overnight, and the other where the morning milking takes place about twice a week. I alternate the cows for milking. I don't use a head bail or leg rope; I just tie the cow up, and she stands to deliver.

Our chooks provide eggs for most of the year and eat the vegetable scraps for one of their two daily feeds.

Garden

From being a keen gardener with a small garden in the city, I have now constructed a large garden. The citrus, banana and pawpaw trees are producing. There is a large rose garden. From the vegetable garden, we have had a range of produce, including herbs, chillies, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, rosellas, peas, beans, silverbeet, beetroots, okras, gherkins, tomatoes, eggplants and zucchinis. I have entered some of the flowers and produce in the show and am increasing my skill in show techniques. The garden would not have been possible without a reliable water supply.

A Challenge

The biggest challenge has been the weather. This period has corresponded with record dry weather and drought in eastern Australia. This has created quite a challenge for a novice livestock breeder and grower of young trees.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Surprises? Yes, there were some unplanned surprises associated with our hobby farm life. The first related to transport. From having one small sedan car in the city, we found that we needed an extra one, a ute, for the country. I use the ute for carrying farm materials and animal fodder, hauling rocks for the garden and for travel over some of the rougher roads in the area. In general, our costs of transport (the extra car, the higher costs of local fuel, the longer distances travelled compared to living in the suburbs) have been much higher than we anticipated.

While the animals that I have (only cattle and chooks) are a source of great enjoyment, they are also a greater tie than I had expected. The animals, their water and their feeders have to be checked so regularly that it is difficult to get away for more than a day or so at a time.

I'm surprised how attached I have become to a few of my cattle – the quiet ones that come up to me for handouts, or to try to lick me. The old-timers around here warned me not to get too attached to the animals as it would become hard to sell them. They were quite right!

Of course, there were a number of smaller surprises – mice in the ceiling, geckos in the house and dangerous snakes coming into the garden – that we hadn't experienced in the city.

ADVICE FROM THE FARM GATE

For city folks not having a rural background and contemplating a country change, I have some advice.

- Visit country relatives and friends to see the lifestyle.
- Take farm-stay holidays.
- Visit the local agricultural shows to study the produce and the animals, and talk to the exhibitors.
- Do lots of reading – of *Grass Roots* and of publications put out by the state Departments of Primary Industry. Look at animal breeds on the internet and self-sufficiency books at the local library.
- Start a list of what sort of property you want to buy and what you are going to do when you get there.
- If not already doing so, take up gardening (herbs are an easy starting point), and plant some fruit trees.
- Make compost; keep a few chooks, ducks or bee hives; practise hydroponics; grow mushrooms. Take whatever steps towards your goal are allowed by the local council and won't annoy the neighbours, making sure you comply with any appropriate state licencing requirements, such as for bees in some states. These actions will start you thinking along the lines of what you can do in a rural environment.

A hobby farm and the rural life are not for everyone, but can be very rewarding.

Next time I'll share my checklist for inspection of a rural property.

A reliable water supply is vital for a productive food garden.

Wild Plant Rescue

by Mary Horsfall, Euroa, Vic.

The City of Blue Mountains encompasses an area of significant environmental value. It is contained within a national park, is part of a World Heritage listed area and is home to over 1300 native plant species, 66 of which are classified as rare or endangered. It is also home to a rapidly growing human population of over 75,000 people.

About 500 new building permits are issued each year and most blocks of land have native plants growing on them. The demand for ever more human habitat is destroying what was once flora and fauna habitat and reducing the area's biodiversity. The character of the Blue Mountains, the very reason many people choose to live there in the first place, is changing as native vegetation is destroyed and introduced garden plants and exotic fauna spread. There's nothing new in this; it is an all-too-familiar scenario across Australia. However, 10 years ago a dedicated group of volunteers decided to do something about it.

Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue Service is a community-based organisation that rescues native plants from building blocks before they are cleared. Plants are potted, mostly into 200-millimetre pots for ease of handling, and transported back to the nursery where they are cared for until they are ready to be sold to residents and authorities of the Blue Mountains. As long as plants are not dug up on days of extreme heat, there is a success rate of between 80 and 90 percent. Soil from the site is used to pot the plants into and a happy bonus often occurs when other indigenous species germinate in the pot.

On suitable sites seeds and cuttings are collected for propagation, leaf litter for mulch is raked up and bagged, and rocks are collected for landscaping. These materials, as well as the rescued and propagated plants, are sold to residents of the area, thereby saving and reusing valuable resources that would otherwise end up at the tip.

Government funding got the project off the ground and saw it through the first few years; now sales of plants and materials fund the group's activities.

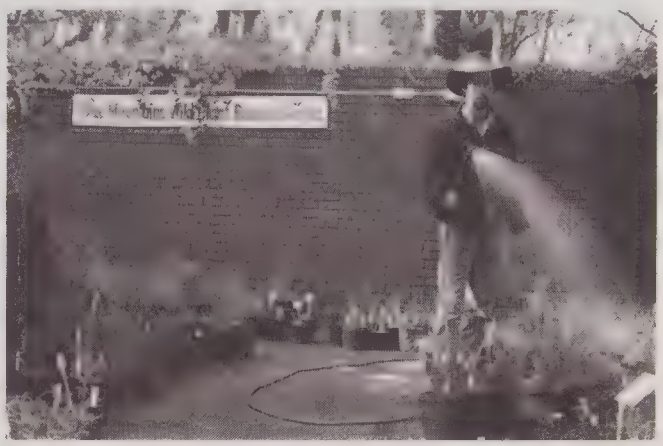
So successful and well known has the service become that the group works in conjunction with such organisations as the Road Transport Authority. A recent project saw volunteers rescuing between 600 and 700 plants from the site of a road-widening operation. The plants were cared for at the nursery until the roadworks had finished and then sold to the RTA to be replanted, almost at the site they came from.

Another measure of the group's success is that it has been used as a model for a second group – Central Coast Wildplant Rescue.

A constant supply of new helpers comes from the Federal Government's Work For The Dole scheme and from the local TAFE, which runs a bush regeneration subject involving a number of hours of practical work. Helpers are given on-the-job training in all aspects of plant rescue and propagation.

Part-time administrator, Judy McLean, advises people who own bush blocks and who need to relocate indigenous plants for any reason to prepare the new planting hole before digging up the plant from its current site and to keep the translocated plant well watered until it has become established.

Anyone wishing to volunteer or to find out more about the group's activities can contact: Judy McLean, ph: 02-4782-6233, fax: 02-4782-6244, email: wildplant@hermes.net.au



A Tomato Tradition

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Vic Bottarro and his wife Maxine couldn't contemplate buying tomato paste or tinned tomatoes; they don't believe they're a patch on the home-grown, home-processed product. Of course, growing up in a family with the Mediterranean tradition of great pride in homemade food has fuelled Vic's desire to put some of the annual harvest from his garden in jars each year. A massive cook-up of tomato purée last year produced more than the family could eat over a year so there is enough in the cellar for the coming months.

The spacious, well-built house was erected about 70 years ago by an Italian builder. A cellar was *de rigour* to store the family's homemade or processed food in. There is even a shed, still in good condition, that was used for smoking meat. Being a shift worker, Vic's hours off don't allow time for chasing up pigs and processing them. Their neighbours might not turn a blind eye to such activities. The original owners had children to feed and relatives close by. 'Maxine and I would be eating for years to get though the volume of meat the previous owner smoked. We're happy with our tomatoes and capsicums,' says Vic.

Of the numerous tomatoes Vic has grown, one that came from seed from his mother has become the favourite. 'It's very red, wonderfully tasty and originally hailed from Italy. It's a long, not round, tomato and may have some relationship with Roma. I'll certainly be growing more next year.' In the past Vic has doubled his planting by putting the lateral shoots he removes from the sides of plants into the ground and allowing them to root. He tried it early in the season and put lots of them in to grow and suddenly found he had tomato plants everywhere. This year he's been more conservative, but with the yields his mother's variety has been producing, he hasn't needed dozens and dozens of plants. 'Tomatoes', he says, 'do wonderfully in my backyard, but lettuces, they're a failure. Not worth the time or the trouble.'

Maxine has an old Fowlers Vacola boiler that goes on the stove and all the bottles of tomatoes and purée are done in this. 'A large saucepan would be just as good. You really need to have a circular wire tray or mat to put in the bottom of the pan to sit the bottles on. One year we cracked all the bottles and so now we use a Fowlers boiler with its purpose-made platform. If the water is heated up slowly they shouldn't crack, but there is the risk. Leave the bottles in the pan until the water cools, then put them in a cool place and observe for a few days to see they're properly sealed. After that, use as desired.'

Wash bottles and lids in hot water and allow to dry.

Soften skins by placing tomatoes in simmering water for a couple of minutes. Remove and place in ice water.

Skins peel off easily. A couple of score marks on the skin at the start makes removal easier.

Place whole tomatoes into sterile jar. Cut large tomatoes into pieces so they fit better.

Some people leave tomatoes as is, Vic likes to add some homemade purée.

Use a knife to ensure there are no air pockets.

Fill jar to the top making sure the arrangement of tomatoes looks attractive.

Place jars in a boiler in cold water to the lid, bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes.

Vic is lucky to have a cellar to store finished preserves in. The cool, dark environment is perfect for preserves.

Plymouth Rock

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

When they first arrived in Australia in the late 1880s, everyone 'was smitten with "Rock" fever, abandoning older breeds of tested ability in their favour', wrote George Bradshaw in the *Agricultural Gazette*. 'The reported laying properties, table qualities, and size, combined with a handsome appearance, stamped them as the best all-round fowls.' Bradshaw, who wrote and advised on poultry in NSW for several decades, was an astute judge of how individual breeds fitted into the emerging poultry industry. He wrote a few years later that although Plymouth Rocks had disappointed in egg lay and egg size and the females easily ran to fat, the breed's many good qualities marked them as ideal for those who wanted a remarkably hardy bird that coped well with confinement, bred easily and produced table meat of much taste because of the long growing period required. Most of this is still relevant today, but you're more likely to find a Rock on the show bench than paying its way on a farm.

Most people are familiar with the Barred Plymouth Rock, a bird with exquisite alternating rows of white and black running parallel across feathers. There are other colour varieties too: White, Black, Buff, plus the rarely seen Blue, Partridge, Columbian and Silver Pencilled. The White variety was a major contributor to the make-up of early meat birds, so has a claim to some fame. A reasonably large bird, you're just as likely to see bantam Rocks as standard size birds these days because of feed savings.

THE PILGRIMS OF PLYMOUTH

The Pilgrim Fathers, the English Puritans who sailed on the Mayflower and set up the Plymouth colony in Massachusetts, took fowls from the southern counties of England. When these birds were mated together and consequent offspring mated and remated, birds of similar type but diverse colour appeared. One favourite was a dark hawk colour, with males in the line carrying yellow and red tones and thus easily distinguished. These latter were refined considerably and called Dominique. Stock like these were known in some localities as Puritan fowls, Pilgrim fowls, Plymouth Country fowls and Plymouth Rocks.

It wasn't until the 1860s that Dominique and Plymouth Rocks were differentiated, size being the major point of difference. The big-bodied birds were classed as Rocks, the smaller ones as Dominique. Asiatic birds had been introduced into the Rocks, imparting increased size and extra vigour. In 1870 Dominiques were required to carry a rose comb only, and the Rocks to display single combs.

Interest in Plymouth Rocks rocketed in the 1870s, and the breed was so improved and standardised that it was admitted to the first American Standard of Perfection in 1874. As well as being a good looking fowl, the Plymouth Rock was promoted as an excellent layer and table bird. Farmers rushed to obtain stock and to make their fortunes with this new breed. White Plymouth Rock soon joined the initial variety, which was the Barred, then later the Buff and several other varieties were developed.

ROCKS IN AUSTRALIA

The utility properties of the breed attracted Australian poultry keepers, and by 1900 Rocks were kept on 60 percent of all farms. Stock were imported from the USA, Canada and England. However, with the introduction of both Wyandottes and Orpingtons, the contribution of the Plymouth Rock was eclipsed. They were still the favourites of many because of their hardiness, but the cost of feeding and lower return compared to the above breeds left them largely an exhibition breed.

A TOP SHOW BREED

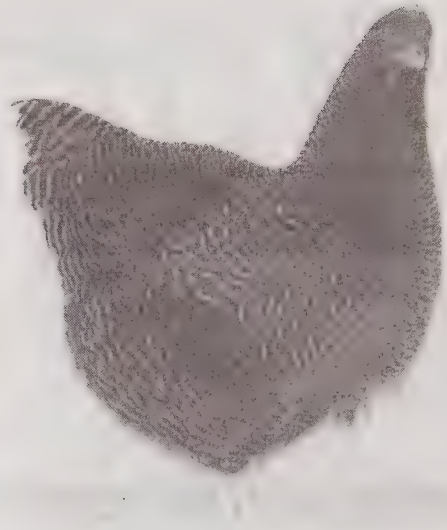
The Barred Plymouth Rock is a spectacular looking bird and an active breed club helps keep it at the forefront. There is not one but two Barred Rocks, a Dark and a Light variety. In Australia we are said to maintain the original cockerel breeding variety as the Dark Barred Plymouth Rock, and the pullet breeding variety as the Light Barred Plymouth Rock. The Americans exhibit a bird with plumage colour that's a shade midway between our Dark and Light, while the English also only breed a single colour, but their birds have a green sheen on the dark bars which is difficult to maintain.

To attain the superb fine barring that distinguishes the Barred varieties, breeders make use of a slow feathering gene in the breed. The gene for barring is distinct from the slow-feathering gene, and when on its own produces the indistinct, irregular barring refereed to as cuckoo. When present with the slow-feathering gene it produces clearly defined, even parallel barring. This is best seen on the Dark Barred male and the Light Barred female. In effect, two breeding pens are required to produce the fine-barred birds, but the opposite gender of both, which have open barring, may also be shown.

SHAPE DEFINES THE BREED

Rocks are long-bodied, broad and deep, with a well-rounded, prominent breast. They have a long straight back,

A Light Barred Plymouth Rock hen.



And this alert pullet is a Dark Barred Rock.

a reasonably long neck and a medium sized tail carried 30 degrees to the horizontal. Legs are moderately long. The medium-sized head carries a fairly small single comb. Wattles are average length. Accepted weights are 4.30 kilograms for adult males and 3.40 kilograms for adult females. Bantams are 1120 – 1135 grams for males and 850 – 960 grams for females.

COLOURS

The Dark Barred and Light Barred varieties are the most commonly encountered. Both have barring of alternative light and dark, essentially white and black. Their plumage is so detailed prospective owners should look at the breed requirements in the *Australian Poultry Standards*. Both the White and the Buff are solid colours. All varieties have a red comb, face, wattles and ear lobes, reddish bay eyes and yellow beak, legs and feet.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

You need patience and room for Rocks to run around and develop. Patience is an advantage in a slow-growing bird because for quite a time they will look like ugly ducklings. Suddenly, they mature and you have lovely birds. If they appeal as a backyard bird, your patience will be tested over egg lay. They're not fantastic layers and the eggs generally are small for a big-bodied bird.

They do have one exciting characteristic, and that is that barred chicks can be sexed at birth. Because this gene is sex linked, the males get a double dose while the females only get one dose. A light patch on the head is the key to gender; it's small and clearly defined on females, and irregular and widely spread on males.

Rocks, like all large-bodied breeds, do best if they can range and develop their muscles. They can be confined and do well, but are a breed that should have access to green grass so the rich yellow of their legs is maintained.

ASSISTANCE FOR BEGINNERS

Rock breeders tend to be a helpful lot, so if you decide you want to take the breed on there are lots of shows where you can view them and talk with breeders. As well, there is an active breed club. Regular newsletters keep members in touch, the contents being predominantly on feeding, breeding and showing tips and results around the shows. Membership is $20 yearly for adults from the Secretary, Adrian Kuys, PO Box 207, Maitland, SA 5573, ph/fax: 08-8836-7742.

Poultry Breeders

We're looking for purebred breeders to list in our next edition of the Poultry Breeders Directory.

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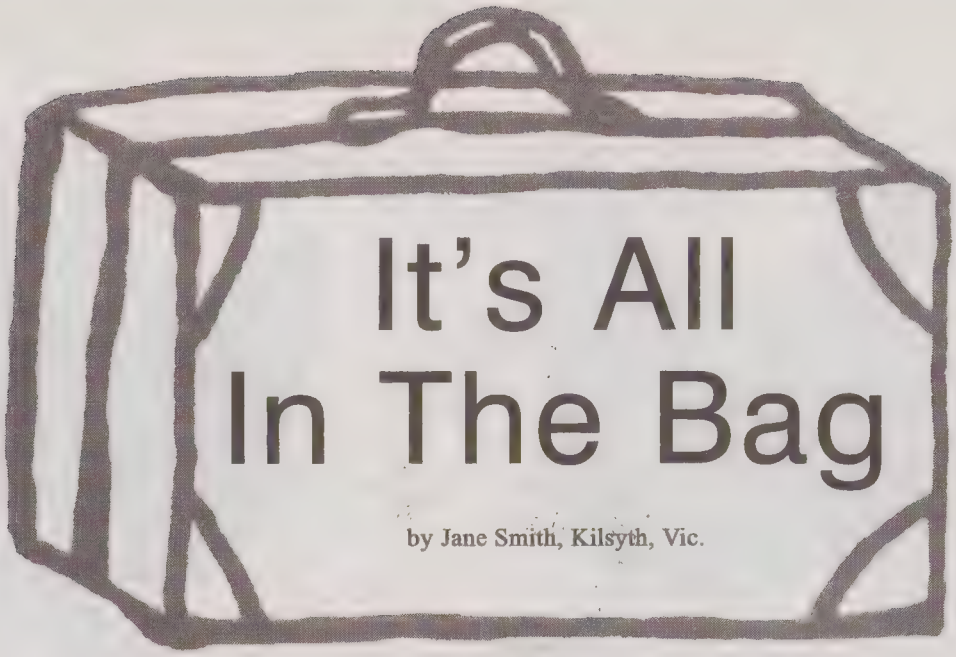


It's All In The Bag

by Jane Smith, Kilsyth, Vic.

Imagine you've had a bad turn of some kind at home, and the ambulance arrived so fast you didn't even have time to find your slippers. So there you are, in hospital, as-is where-is, making what feels like a public appearance and wearing anything but your best presentation outfit. Eventually, somebody will fetch what they think you might need from home, but it won't be exactly what you wanted for what might become more than an overnight stay.

Now, as a young-mother-to-be, you'd have been better prepared for such an occasion away from home. Knowing the likelihood of being swept up and carried away to a hospital or elsewhere, you'd have said to those involved, 'It's all in the bag . . .'

And so it would be. A small and very carefully packed bag would be close at hand. Such a comfort, just to know it was there, ready for a journey that might be made sooner rather than later.

Such a bag of necessities also has its place in later life. It doesn't have to be a bag of needed things (and some little luxuries) taken out of circulation from normal life and kept packed away. A special drawer will do, into which clothing and toiletries can be stored on a rotating basis, to be used and replaced promptly.

The actual bag, complete with identity label filled in and attached, can be kept in the same room, zipped and flattened. But do tell anyone likely to be involved in any fast getaway you might be making where the bag is located *and* which drawer is the right one to empty directly into the bag!

What should you put aside ready for your getaway bag? This question reminds me of those television programs where people are asked what they'd take with them if about to be marooned on a desert island. Funnily enough, the first consideration was always for their mind's companion, perhaps a favourite book or two. That might be what the so-called little luxuries amount to.

In the case of the hospital bag, a small writing pad, envelopes and some stamps and a couple of ballpoint pens would take up very little room on the bottom. A copy of a treasured book, in paperback, or something new and entirely unread, could go beside them.

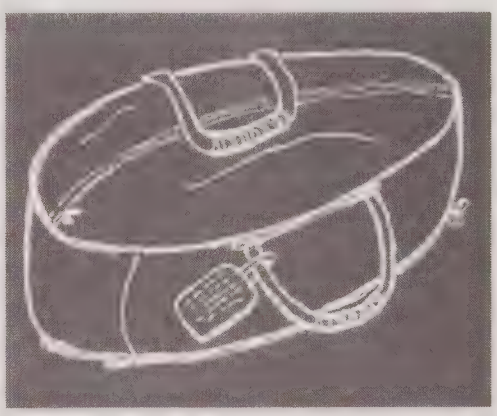
Then we get to the practicalities, the garments to wear in bed in a place where we are likely to meet not only loved ones who come visiting, but people in general. A warm dressing gown never causes regret for the space it takes up in the bag. Warm woollen socks too, because although a hospital may feel overwarm when we are well and just visiting, hospital patients often say their feet feel cold. Slippers are good to have for walking around, but socks kept on when lying on the bed or sitting in a chair are so comforting, so both slippers and socks are needed.

Since this note arises out of discussions with more senior folk like me, I'll get straight to the point and say it: have some comfy underpants ready in your hospital kit, it bolsters confidence when in an unfamiliar environment.

It wouldn't hurt either, to include a roomy and comfortable cotton housecoat, since it folds up to almost nothing. Toiletries can be kept in one of those lined and zipped little bags in your special drawer, and used and replaced in the times when nothing is ever going to go wrong. But don't get lax in the topping up!

As a last thought, keeping doctor's prescriptions in the same drawer would ensure they travelled with us in an emergency, to be shown to those who need to know the details promptly.

As the scouts' motto goes: Be Prepared. So if and when our own moment of high drama comes along, we can smile reassuringly at those about us and say, 'Oh, it's all in the bag'.



Wonderful Warrigal Greens

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

Many native plants grow naturally on my land and my main green vegetable is warrigal greens (*Tetragonia tetragonoides*), growing lushly at the kitchen door. Used by Captain Cook to prevent scurvy among his ship's crew, it was soon after sold commercially throughout UK and Europe as: 'A new succulent vegetable called tetragonia', in the verbose sales blurb of the 1800s. Joseph Banks 'found it growing wild almost at the high tide line in Botany Bay' and took seeds back to Old Blighty. The Kew Royal Gardens propagated it and distributed seed to Europe, where it is still popular as a hardy summer spinach known as tetragon.

I think it tastes more like snake beans than spinach and the kids find it more palatable too.

Promotions in England in the 1800s proclaimed: 'It has a profoundly agreeable flavour exceeding that of spinage [sic] and silverbeets and 20 plants are quite sufficient to give a daily supply since the middle day of June'.

Summer spinach, perpetual spinach, New Zealand spinach, Botany Bay spinach, everlasting spinage, tetragon, warrigal greens, warrigal spinach are some of the names it's had over the years. Warrigal is one of many Aboriginal words for 'wild'.

I recently saw a menu on the window of a trendoid cafe in Brisbane listing 'Stingray with Warrigal Greens'. How the wheel turns. Captain Cook well knew the value of good nutrition and is credited with having 'a healthy crew who never knew or succumbed to scurvy'. His log records that on the very eve of the Endeavour's departure from Stingrays Harbour – now Botany Bay – the crew feasted on a hearty meal of boiled wild spinage and cooked stingray fish.

GROWING

Tetragon is a ground creeper, low-set and unassuming, leaves are deltoid, arrow-shaped or triangular, with a very bright glistening appearance given by almost dew-like cells on the leaves and succulent stems. I find it grows rapidly to become a fire retardant and weed suppressant ground cover barrier around buildings.

It is found wild in most areas of NSW and southern Queensland, and arid sand dune spots in other states. It can be found in the company of other edible succulents on the banks of streams and tidal estuaries, although drought does not seem to affect it adversely. In the garden it grows well without fertilisers and pesticides. Why isn't this wonderful vegie available in our supermarkets?

The seeds are best sown when still green and tend to become unviable once they have gone brown. Here, it self-sows in early spring and the application of a little fertiliser designed for native plants helps it grow faster. Sandy soil seems to favour its propagation and my sandy soil is very acidic at pH 3.4 – 4.2, as tested by Department of Agriculture NSW methods.

USING

Warrigal greens can be harvested all year in my subtropical climate, but in late winter the plant growth slows as seed is set, which absorbs energy from the main plant.

Some people only eat the five centimetres below the terminal bud, saying that the older leaves are tough and leathery. If grown in shade, the normal five-centimetre-long leaves sprint to fifteen centimetres long.

High in oxalates (oxalic acid), as are spinach and Swiss chard, it is best blanched in boiling water for four minutes to leach out the soluble oxalates, then removed with tongs or a gauze scoop (available in Asian kitchenware shops) and plunged directly into iced water to reinvigorate. The blanched vegetable can now be safely used in pestos, salads or other cooking, but you must discard the brownish cooking water, as you should do with Swiss chard. The Swiss actually won't use the green leaves of Swiss chard (what we call spinach) as they believe them to be toxic and only cook up the white stalks and serve them with cheese sauce. I can't find any nutritional values for our Oz warrigal greens, but I would assume a good level of vitamin C, maybe D, and iron. (Somebody do a study on this for their thesis!)

When cooking, don't add salt as the plant is naturally salty. Plants with high levels of oxalic acid tend to have a salty taste in the older foliage and leave a constriction in the throat if not blanched in boiling water. Common sense is required. A good calcium intake will prevent any deleterious effects of oxalates.

Anyway, I use warrigal greens quite often in omelettes, stews, indeterminate *je ne sais quoi* melanges and salads and I'm still alive – well mostly – but I do blanch the leaves and stems.

Many, many thanks to Jenny Denison of NSW Agriculture Department, Coffs Harbour, an amazing source of agricultural knowledge.

Make A Denim Quilt

by Dianne Jackson, Valhalla.

Need something to protect the back seat of the family car? Looking for a hard-wearing quilt for a lively child? Do you enjoy sitting around a campfire wrapped in a blanket? Then this is just the quilt for you. It's made from squares cut from denim and drill, joined in strips, then, strip by strip, stitched to a backing. So collect all those preloved jeans, denim skirts, overalls and boiler suits to make this quilt.

PREPARING THE PATCHES

First cut out areas of useful material for your patches. You might need to augment your supply at op shops. Long denim skirts are ideal. Use quality sewing thread to ensure the quilt stays in good condition throughout its long and hard-working life.

Squares can be any size that suits your scraps. I cut 120 patches 17 centimetres square and 20 half-patches 17 x 9 centimetres. This was more patches than needed, but gave me greater choice of colours. Some patches I made up with a centre square surrounded by narrow strips to make 17-centimetre squares (see photo). If you decide to cut smaller patches, the quilt will take longer to make and use considerably more sewing thread. I wanted a quilt that wasn't too big to launder in my twin tub washing machine, so the finished size was 123 x 228 centimetres.

Dyeing Patches

It's a simple matter to enliven the quilt with some colour variation if your squares seem to be too uniform in hue. Many of my patches were shades of blue, so I decided to dye some lighter squares for variety. I checked in my pantry for something natural that didn't need mordant, wasn't poisonous and wouldn't spoil my pans for future food cooking.

Meanwhile, I dampened about a dozen patches so the dye would take evenly. I put six tea bags in a pan of boiling water, added six white denim squares and simmered the lot for 20 minutes. The patches turned an attractive fawn. In a second pan of boiling water I measured three tablespoons of turmeric and added squares of light blue denim and white drill, again simmering 20 minutes.

I stirred the contents often with a wooden stick as they simmered. Each pan was left to cool, then I rinsed the patches several times till the rinse water was clear. They were laid out to dry on the grass. The various blue denims had changed to muted greens and the white to a bright yellow, shades that would possibly mellow in time. Finally, the patches were steam ironed.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- about 120 patches of denim and drill, 17 cm square
- 20 half-patches of denim and drill, 17 x 9 cm
- 7 cm wide binding (I used 7.7 metres of homespun)
- 3 reels good quality thread in neutral shade

Lay out the squares to make a pleasing design.

The finished quilt is hard-wearing and washes well.

- tape measure
- 15 safety pins
- backing material, 160 x 260 cm for my quilt
- glass-headed pins
- steam iron
- binoculars

Optional Extras

- new sewing machine needle, general purpose, size 80 – 90
- seam ripper
- table of similar height to sewing machine
- walking or even-feed sewing foot
- old double bed sheet
- cardboard core from kitchen paper towel or something similar
- Pigma brand marking pen

MAKING THE QUILT

Laying Out The Design

I planned 15 rows of patches. The first and odd-numbered rows had eight squares. The second and even-numbered rows began with one of the half-patches, followed by seven squares, then ended with a half-patch (diagram 1).

Clear an area on the living room floor and lay out an old sheet on which to place all the patches in rows and move them around until you're happy with the design. I turned some squares wrong side up for contrast. At this point patchworkers use a door peephole viewer for an overview to check if the result is pleasing and colours are evenly distributed. I used binoculars, looking through them back to front for a similar effect.

Number each row, 1 – 15, by writing large numbers on scraps of paper pinned to the first patch at the start of each row.

Having done this, I usually stop work and come back to it a day or two later to see if I still like the layout. If you decide to stop now, fold the sides of the sheet in and over the patches, then fold the bottom edge up and over. Carefully roll the folded sheet up to the top edge and store in a safe place.

Sewing The Patches

Set your sewing machine stitch to the smallest you can easily unpick. Fill two or three bobbins with thread and fit a new machine needle if you have one.

Patches are quickly pieced in pairs. Align right sides of two patches and join with a one-centimetre seam. Do not cut thread, but feed in the second pair of patches from the same row and continue joining pairs (four pairs in first row). In row two join the first half-patch and full patch and continue as above till you have four pairs and a half-patch remains. Continue joining until all pairs are sewn.

Iron seams flat and open, then snip the pairs of patches apart, carefully laying out in correct order on the sheet using the first numbered patch in each row as a guide.

Now sew each pair of patches together as you did before (two units in each row) and press seams open. Finally, join the half-patches at the end of even-numbered rows. Once more appraise the colour arrangement through the wrong end of the binoculars. You might wish to unpick and relocate some patches.

To join the strips or rows, if possible, place a table the same or similar height as your sewing machine on the left so that as you attach each strip the quilt can lie across the table, making it easier to handle. Brush out any lint around the bobbin area and fit the walking foot if you have one.

Diagram 1: Laying Out Squares

Diagram 2: Joining Binding Strips

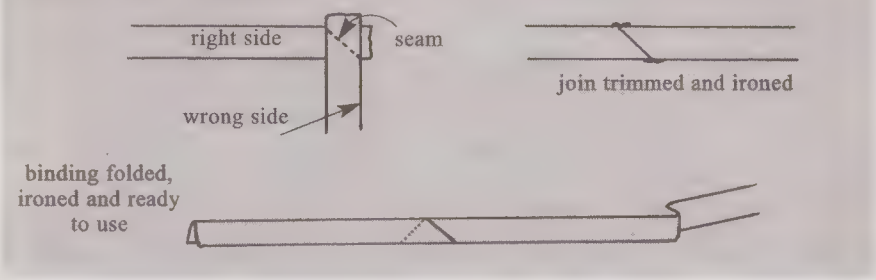
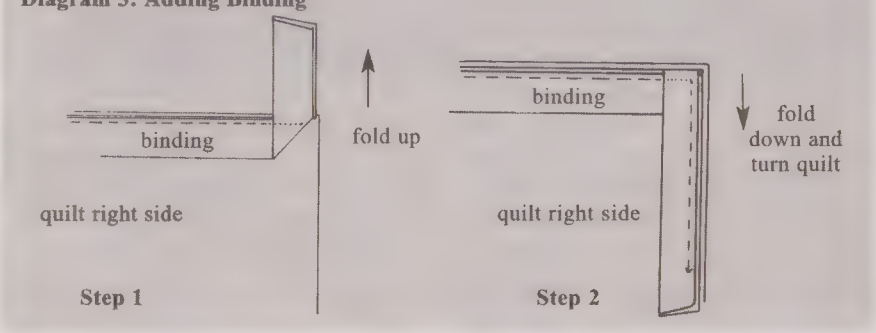


Diagram 3: Adding Binding



Backing

Quilt backing can be a flannel winter sheet, fleecy cotton, light wool or a bonded material. Pieces of material can be joined to make up the size needed. Don't forget that new material might shrink or, even worse, the dye might run, so wash it first. Iron the backing then fold in half both ways. Iron each fold. These are your guidelines so it is a good idea to tack along the folds with contrasting thread.

With backing wrong side up, short

edge to the top, centre strip 8 right side up with its top edge aligned along the centre horizontal fold or guideline. Centre strip 7 on the vertical guideline and wrong side up, laid on top of strip 8 with the edges matching. Pin along the top edge of both strips and backing, using glass-headed pins, and stitch a one-centimetre seam through all layers, carefully removing pins as you go. Steam iron this seam then fold back strip 7. Steam iron again over the top of this seam, checking for any overlooked pins (they will be difficult to remove later).

Flatten and temporarily pin along top edge of strip 7. Centre and lay strip 6 wrong side up on top of strip 7, repin edge and stitch a seam through both strips and backing. Steam iron seam as before. Continue to centre, stitch and iron twice the remaining strips in correct order. When you have attached strip 1, tack top edge to backing material.

Turn the quilt around so attached strips are closest to you. Flatten and pin along what becomes the top edge of strip 8. Align strip 9, centred and wrong side up along this edge, repin and stitch to backing as before. Don't forget to iron twice each time a strip is added so work is as flat as possible. Continue to add remaining strips, to row 15, then tack top edge of this row to backing.

Iron the quilt one last time. Trim all four edges.

Binding

To ascertain the binding length measure along each edge and add 63.5 centimetres to this total.

Cut binding strips seven centimetres wide. Cut ends at 45 degrees and join to form a continuous length (diagram 2). Press all seams open. Fold an end under one centimetre and press fold. With long edges together, gently press along the centre fold. I used 762 centimetres of binding.

Wind binding around cardboard core to store and pin end with the turned edge. When you are ready to attach the binding remove this pin, unroll about 90 centimetres and repin binding to tube.

With quilt right side up, leave a 15-centimetre tail of binding and start to pin halfway along a side edge of the quilt, aligning cut edge of binding along quilt edge. Stitch a generous one-centimetre seam with binding tube in your lap, unpinning a length of binding off the tube as you need it.

Corners

At the corners avoid joins in the binding. Stop stitching one centimetre from the first corner. Backstitch and remove quilt from machine. With seam edge at top, fold binding at a 45-degree angle into corner. Next, fold binding down along raw edge of quilt.

Reposition quilt top at the corner under presser foot of sewing machine and begin stitching along next edge (diagram 3). The edge just completed is to left of needle. Repeat with remaining three corners.

Continue to within 20 centimetres of starting point. Trim end of binding at 45-degree angle so end will slip inside folded edge of 15-centimetre tail (already cut and folded at 45-degree angle). Complete this seam past the join and backstitch. Slipstitch join in binding. Turn binding to back of quilt and hem, carefully folding mitre around corners.

Last Thoughts

It is customary to embroider or write the maker's name and date somewhere on a quilt. The ink must be waterproof and stand up to laundering. I use a Pigma pen, available from craft shops.

In use I found this denim quilt quite weighty. Before this I hadn't thought a pair of jeans was particularly heavy. Perhaps a smaller quilt would be more suitable for a young child.

Neville felt the quilt colours blended into the surrounding bushland. Blues and blue-grey for the sky, greens for the trees, grass and shady places. Fawn suggested rocks and sand. Of course, the yellow and gold for wattle. This isn't a quilt that remains pristine and kept for best. It is used often and enjoyed, protecting the back seat of our car so it is always with us on our picnics, trips and adventures.

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All Patched Up

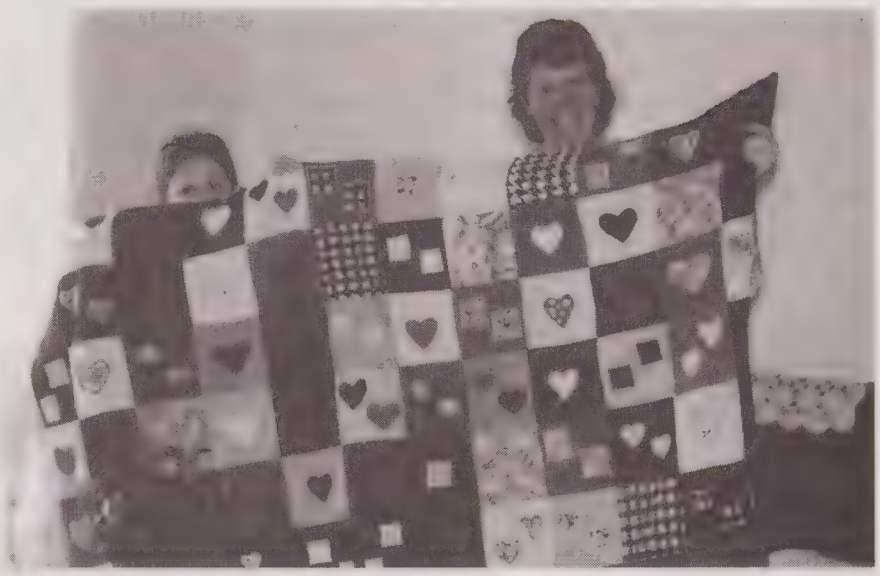
by Sandra Lynn Evans, Traralgon, Vic.

I realised the truth in the saying about necessity being the mother of invention when I was left with four kids to raise. Children, that is, I also had several young goats, but that is another story. Money was scarce and our house inadequately heated. As winter approached I worried about keeping us warm at night.

I've always loved sewing; my dolls had extensive wardrobes when I was a child and I continue this with my kids (and friends and neighbours too), making tracksuits and windcheaters in every colour and size. I did a stretch sewing class when my second was just a baby and was thrilled with the results.

Even though clothes were handed down through my quickly growing brood, there were often many outgrown items still in good condition. One night I decided to put them to good use and cut out all the best bits. I trimmed these into 15-centimetre squares and sewed them into strips, then sewed the strips together to form two single-bed-sized squares, which I subsequently joined together. I stayed up all night, but was thrilled with my efforts.

The result was a very warm, multicoloured blanket that could be easily cleaned in the washing machine and dried much quicker than woollen blankets, even in the cold winter. This was a real bonus with small children. The kids loved it. Before winter arrived we each had a cosy blanket. In my subsequent efforts, each square was appliquéd with small cut-out shapes, which not only added to the attractive finish, but also added weight and warmth.



Sandra displays her hand-sewn and appliquéd quilt. Even beginners can make it.

A compulsive hoarder, I hated throwing anything out, so had several boxes of new material scraps in my cupboards. I kept on making my fleecy patchwork blankets in various sizes and sold quite a few at local markets. By this stage I was checking the op shops regularly for off-cuts of fleecy material. Even the tiniest pieces were used in dolls' blankets, which proved very popular at Christmas.

There is a lot of work involved, but all that is forgotten when I see the end results. Although I have done a lot of sewing since childhood, it is a project well within the scope of raw beginners. For me, it became more than just a project to provide warmth for my family, the activity kept me occupied at a time when my spirits were low and the pride in my achievement was a necessary boost to my confidence.

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Recycling Makes Sweet Soil

by Joan Willis, Kyneton, Vic.

Smelly droppings around the garden are a dog owner's despair. Don't dump the dog, decompose their doings to fertilise your plants – sweet.

Living with dogs presents the problem of how to dispose cleanly of their poo. Dog manure underfoot is not very pleasant, especially if the foot is walking into the house with its accompanying smell to permeate everywhere. I tackled this problem 30 years ago and my solution, based on composting techniques, still provides me with a sweet-smelling product that fertilises my garden, and more.

FOUND OBJECTS

I wanted to use an environmentally friendly method that would recycle old containers and, most importantly, cost virtually no money to make. While walking around the farm sheds I spotted some old 200-litre drums lying in a corner. I could see that they would be ideal for my purpose, so I cut the tops and bottoms off, leaving strong cylinders. One good thing about living on a farm is that there is always plenty of space to choose from. I chose a well-drained, well-sheltered area in the fowl yard, partly shaded by trees. I dug the soil well underneath each drum to make a good foundation for decomposition. I made sure a tap and hose were in easy reach because I knew I would need to water the drums in summer. I had already read several books about compost worms and knew my intended project would need a cover to keep light out and let rain in.

The local carpet shop provided me with scraps of good second-hand carpet and I found hessian potato bags at the weekend market. I washed the bags thoroughly in case they had been in contact with chemical sprays. A search around the farm sheds yielded a motley collection of bits of reo, old wire fridge trays and other makeshift pieces of wire that would make covers to hold the carpet in place and deter the chooks from scratching out the worms, while still allowing rain to soak in.

BEFORE THE WORMS

With my containers constructed, it was time to prepare a food source for the worms. I found a small square bucket and labelled it 'worms', stored it underneath the kitchen sink and told my family that it was for any kitchen scraps not suitable for the chooks to eat. I already owned a pooper-scooper (bought from local pet shop) that I still use to pick up the dog manure.

Before buying any worms I needed to have a half-drum of maturing refuse, as I had read that you do not put worms into fresh manure. I half-filled the first drum with a mixture of kitchen scraps, autumn leaves, dog poo and any other organic thing that had once lived and was nontoxic, this included eggshells, feathers, hair, animal fat and used cooking oil. I had read that orange peel and onions were not suitable for worms. I kept a separate bucket under the sink for food scraps for the chooks and will explain this presently.

What I was building now was a system to turn waste not suitable for chooks into clean garden fertiliser. After about two months the lower layer of material was broken down enough to put the worms in and, of course, each day new dog doings and scraps were put on top. I found quite a few beetles and other little creatures had taken up residence and they helped to break down the mixture as well.

I went to my garden shop and purchased a carton of tiger and red compost worms; they are not the same as the common earthworm. I placed them on top of the moist mixture in the drum and covered them lightly with a hessian bag. I placed a piece of carpet on top of the drum to keep the light out, as compost worms require a dark environment. I put the reo or wire square on top of the carpet to prevent the chooks from scratching the worms out. Finally, I kept the mixture just moist but not wet.

RIPPER METHOD

This method has proved very successful. In the summer when it is dry I regularly check the drums to make sure they do not dry out. They actually stay moist very well, but occasionally I need to hose them. I do this very thoroughly; the water must run right through and out of the bottom. Never have a situation where this does not occur or your worms will die from drowning.

In heat waves particularly, it is essential to be vigilant as the drums can dry out if neglected. This is another reason why a partly shaded spot is best. In very hot climates it would be best located in a deeply shaded spot. Always wet the carpet cover to keep the environment humid. Worm activity does slow down in cold weather, however, when conditions are warm the mixture will look to be full of worms. They are top feeders so most of the worms will be in the top of the mixture.

As I have the drums side by side, after all of the nutrient has passed through the worms' bodies and become

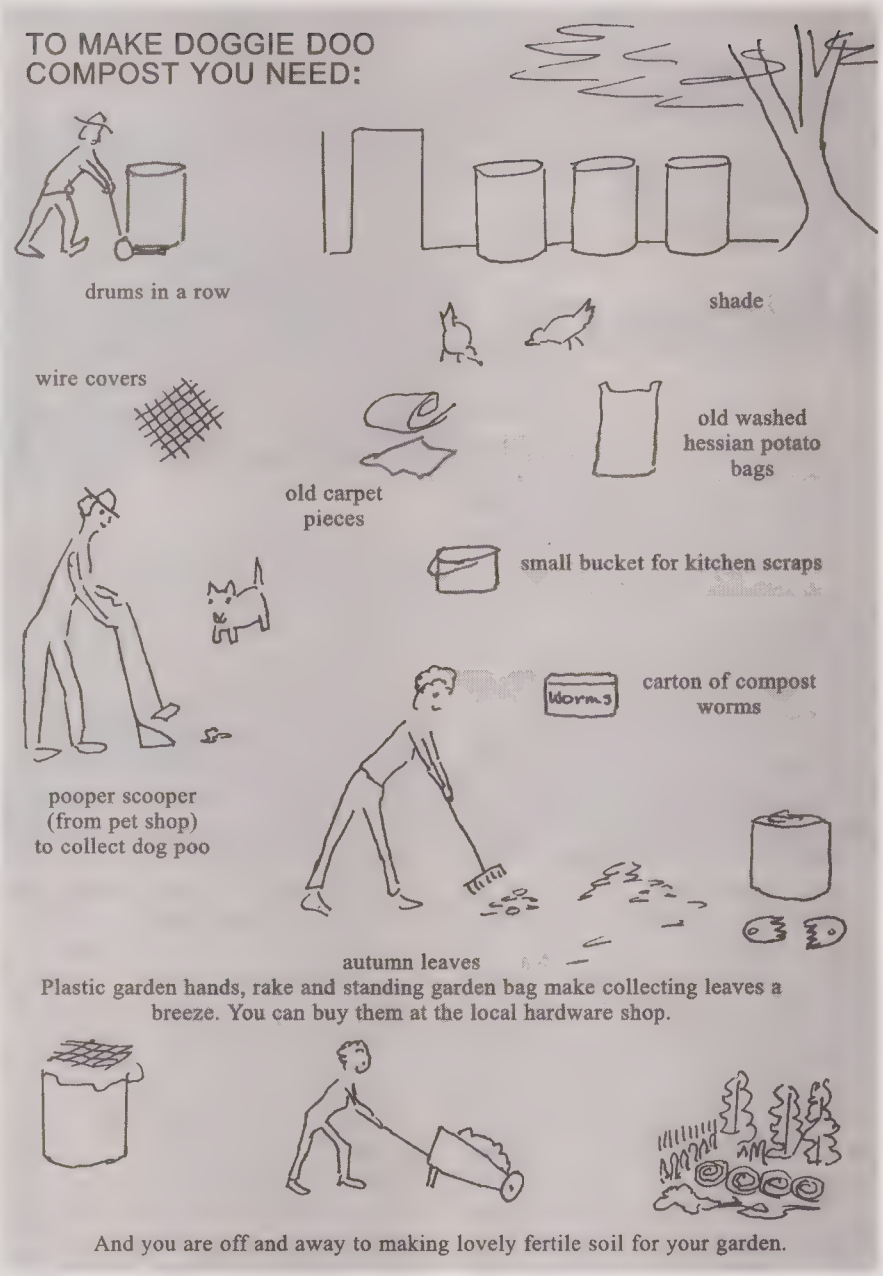
HEALTH TIP

Remember, don't put doggie poo in your normal compost or fresh on food gardens.

an earth-like fertiliser, the worms migrate to the next drum. Frequently, several drums have worms in them at the same time. I wait a few months without adding fresh scraps before emptying the used drums and wheelbarrowing the fertile soil they have created to feed my garden.

I have read advice in books saying you must keep your worms contained or else they will escape. I do not agree with this. They only move when the food runs out. They do leave the drums, but they reproduce in large numbers so it doesn't matter; in fact, it is a bonus. When a water tank developed rust holes and had to be replaced, my husband cut it in two halves and put it in the fowl yard for me. I use this to make compost with barrow loads of weeds from my large garden. I throw food scraps from the chook bucket on top. The chooks come running to eat the scraps, scratching vigorously and helping to speed the process of compost becoming rich black soil. Some compost worms migrate to these tanks and I find them when I dig out soil for my garden. Somehow they survive the process, although I am sure plenty of worms are part of the chooks' diet. The drums are still alive with handfuls of worms busy eating and reproducing, so it doesn't matter. The end result is healthy chooks laying plenty of eggs, and lots of rich soil and fertiliser that end up as a healthy vegetable and flower garden. The other big advantages are less rubbish going to the tip and absolutely no smells.

We can really enjoy the scent of the honeysuckle and roses when we go outdoors.


TO MAKE DOGGIE DOO COMPOST YOU NEED:
drums in a row
shade
wire covers
old washed hessian potato bags
old carpet pieces
small bucket for kitchen scraps
Worms
carton of compost worms
pooper scooper (from pet shop) to collect dog poo
autumn leaves
Plastic garden hands, rake and standing garden bag make collecting leaves a breeze. You can buy them at the local hardware shop.
And you are off and away to making lovely fertile soil for your garden.

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Dam Good Project

by Trever J Wilkins, Durong, Qld.

If you have a dam on your land, why not think about a little landscaping? All you need is some sand and the right plants, and you could even create a beach!

I think it's great to see cities like Cairns and Brisbane building their own inner-city sandy beaches. Beaches are people magnets. But beaches mean relaxation and lifestyle for more than just humans. Away from the madding crowds they are navigation and homing beacons for migratory birds – bird-watchers' paradises.

Sand is cheap inland, so I wonder why smaller country towns aren't getting in on the act. Country beaches could reverse Australia's tourist and population flows from the crowded coastline to the empty, unspoilt inland.

Australia's coastline is unique in that private ownership of even part of an ocean beach is prohibited. Yet small acreage farms in this country all have one or more fresh-water dams, which are just crying out for a simple landscaping job and some semitrailer loads of sand. Imagine all the travelling expenses and hassles you would save if you owned your own private beach. You could holiday at home for free – in peace and harmony.

BUILD A BEACH

Why not build your own beach? I did, for about a third of the cost of a ride-on-mower. You see, I am totally addicted to having sand between my toes and just have to live close to a beach. Another addiction is designing ultra-light canoes and solar-powered catamarans – DamCats – but they are not much good without water, and even better with a beach to land them on.

I often thought how nice it would be to own my very own white sandy beach, minus the usual broken beer bottles, aluminium cans, plastic bottles, tangled fishing lines, fishing hooks, lead sinkers, plastic bags, disposable nappies, dirty needles, cigarette butts, old thongs and dog poo.

I'd spent the previous seven years at Sandy Beach on Russell Island in southern Moreton Bay, and I wanted a change from salt water, especially on calm windless mornings when I like to swim. Unfortunately, these days this is also when the mirror-like surface is usually covered by a filthy film of two-stroke outboard motor oil. I craved for uncrowded, unpolluted water you could swim in at any time, and drink even, without fear of sharks, speeding motor yachts or jet skis.

That's just one reason why I bought my new property east of Durong in south-west Queensland. The place is well established and has two houses and two good-sized dams that are perfect for a bird sanctuary and a place to try out my electric outboard catamarans.

Every morning my visitors and I breakfast with dozens of cheeky and amazingly beautiful parrots of every kind and colour, but the quieter water-birds – wild duck families, stately cranes and sun-drying cormorants – are my personal favourites.

I have seen shy sandpipers all the way from Russia lined up along the water's edge at sunset. There are even tiny pardalotes building their nests inside sand dunes. They tunnel into the vertical sand cliffs my co-workers and I leave in the half-excavated heaps left by the tip-truck. My WWOOFers (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) and I have much work to do, including manually spreading 100 cubic metres of pure white sand. Machinery, no thanks; hard work keeps me skinny, fit and healthy; it saves paying gym fees, and I like deep breathing fresh air.

White sand can be walked on with bare feet even at midday on the hottest summer's day. Just don't try it on sand that's any darker or you might end up with painful blistered soles.

The sand I used on my beach was cheap enough, only one dollar a cubic metre. The biggest expense was, of course, the cartage – by the hour. Luckily, one of my not-too-distant and friendly neighbours has endless supplies of the stuff. I intend to anchor one of my mini-catamarans in the centre of my largest dam so swimmers will have a safe swimming destination as well as a beaut mini-houseboat in which to sleep out on the water on moonlit nights.

A shovel and a rake are all the tools you will need for maintenance of your beach. A 200-millimetre thickness of sand will smother and kill the toughest grass.

You can find sand suppliers in your local phone book. Actually, sand is what is left when the good earth is washed or

Trever's landscaped dam and beach area was constructed with the help of enthusiastic WWOOFers. The project has enhanced his lifestyle and is already a magnet for numerous visiting bird species.

blown away. That's why we have plenty of it, and there's likely to be even more in future as desertification spreads.

Dam Safety

Dams, large or small, are dangerous – deadly even – if you can't swim, if you indulge in drugs or alcohol, or dive into water that you can't see all the way through. Mobile logs can lie hidden, submerged like submarines. Dive head first onto a fresh-water turtle even and I know who will live to tell the tale. Small children are always attracted to water and need to be supervised 110 percent of the time. Life jackets for poor or nonswimmers are a must. Weeds can literally wrap around your legs and drag you down. Know the water you swim in and you will live a long and healthy life; it's never too late to learn to swim.

Even in summer champion swimmers can get cold-water leg cramps in still-water dams if they are not careful. Water just a metre below the surface can be icy cold while the surface is nice and warm from the sun's rays. I always keep my legs up near the surface and use a frog-type kick with breast-stroke arm and hand motions, or float on my back, kicking as for back-stroke while using figure-eight treading-water hand motions. An underwater dolphin-style whole-body kick is also fast and fun and keeps you horizontal up in the warmer surface water. Swim goggles and flippers add to the fun.

WHOLE-DAM LIFESTYLE

As well as benefiting from a beach, farm dams can be upgraded with waterside cabins. Solar-powered pumps can be used to create creeks and waterfalls. Why not add a small rainforest while you're at it? Consider canoes, rowing boats, mini-catamarans, floating islands and small-scale jetties and wharfs as well. You can stock your dam with fish, crayfish, ducks and geese. Waterlilies come in many colours and make fabulous eye candy.

The edges of dams have permanently damp soil in which vegetables and flowering plants just seem to grow wild. No need to dig, just push them under the (not too) damp surface with a stick, and the cuttings will strike and grow easily.

Why leave your dam as just a water storage when there are so many options open to you? Happy dam lifestyle!

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Yarrow

by Cheryl Beasley, Robina, Qld.

Yarrow is a beautiful fernlike plant that grows in full sun or semi-shade. It contains remarkable healing properties and is an astringent. This plant is best for oily skins, however, it also closes pores so benefits those with a slightly oily central panel on the face. Yarrow is a good acne treatment.

MOISTURISING YARROW CREAM

2 tbsp lanolin
1 tbsp almond oil
1 tbsp apricot oil
1 tbsp yarrow infusion

Melt the lanolin in a pan over hot water and then add the oils and warm infusion while beating until thoroughly cool. Use after toning. Blot off the excess oiliness after 10 minutes with a soft cloth or towel.

YARROW STEAMER

Do not use if you have any breathing difficulties, such as asthma.

Place two tablespoons of chopped yarrow into a bowl and pour over boiling water to half-fill the bowl. Steam your face over this by placing a towel over the head and bowl. After 10 minutes wash the face with a gentle yarrow infusion and leave to dry on the skin. Moisturise when the yarrow infusion has dried thoroughly.

ASTRINGENT FACE MASK

1 egg white
1 tsp strong yarrow infusion

Beat the two ingredients together lightly then apply evenly to the face and neck. Leave until thoroughly dry then remove with warm water. This is a good tightening mask for open pores and oily skin.

YARROW TONER

3 tbsp cucumber juice
1 cup yarrow infusion
2 drops tincture of benzoin

Combine the ingredients in a jar and use on the skin after cleansing to close pores and tighten the skin.

Yarrow infusion alone makes a good facial toner for oily skin. Always moisturise after toning to keep the skin healthy.

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SEEKING A BETTER WAY?

In this harsh and materialistic world, the gentle-hearted seek a home. Both young and old find themselves in the midst of a world greatly changed from the ideal that God would have man enjoy. Do you long to get back to God, and live a simple life in the country, baking bread, wearing traditional modest clothing, living in a cottage among others who feel as you do?

We believe God made all things, and that He is not happy with the way we humans go about our business today. Both men and women have been drawn into competition with one another, rather than being companions of a common cause, that of raising good children in a kind of tribal environment where there is a strong sense of identity and belonging. Swimming against the tide can seem like a lonely thing to do, but if you have faith to resist the strong delusions and the propaganda of our time, then you may be pleasantly surprised to find there are others just like you.

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FUSSY FOWL

Could you please give me some chook info? I bought six day-old layers, pedigree unknown. I ended up with five hens, and one rooster that is now deceased. They were raised by a tiny Game bantam. I have been reading lately of ISAbrowns and wonder if this is the breed I have. They are brown with black tips on their tails, wonderful layers, voracious eaters, but the dumbest chooks I have ever owned. I don't want to be too unkind to them because I think they really do like me. They are given plenty of greens, love to be out every afternoon, and one in particular likes a cuddle. They also love grey-striped sunflower seed – mixed with the laying mash, which is very selectively eaten and mostly wasted.

Another question: My mother always said not to give chooks pawpaw seed; is this correct? I read recently that they are good for expelling worms so I wonder if it is one of the old wives' tales.

Chelmer Roots,
BILOELA 4715.

There are several red-plumaged imported commercial layers – ISAbrown, Hisex and Hyline, plus some locally bred crosses and, for you to get a rooster among the chicks, I'd put my money on the latter. The imported genetics are generally very closely guarded and the chicks are professionally sexed, so you wouldn't expect to have a male turn up. It would be fair to liken the commercial layers to dairy cattle: high producers that need lots of feed to maintain output. For this reason they are going to be voracious and do need a well-balanced ration. They are not unique in their preference for sunflower seed; almost everyone who provides a grain ration that includes sunflower seed complains that their birds become addicted to them and, like your hens, do not want to eat the other components in their feed. From a quick glance at a comparative nutritional chart on poultry feed ingredients, sunflower seed meal is high in protein, lowish in fat and rich in linoleic acid, some B vitamins and the essential amino acids fowls need. There is no simple way of getting the hens to eat a little of everything and not binge on sunflower seeds, however, it is well accepted that fowls are very skilled at balancing their diet. They may know they get most of what they need from these seeds. Leave the ration in their house until it's all eaten rather than topping up each day.

We haven't heard about the effectiveness of pawpaw seed as a vermifuge, perhaps readers can share some hands-on learning. Pawpaw has excellent digestive properties, but we are not familiar with its use in the hen house. For the time being, stick to crushed garlic in the water for three days a month: one or two cloves per three small-bodied hens.

SHEEP WORM SYSTEM

Sheep breeders who experience problems with the barber's pole worm *Haemonchus contortus* (causing anaemia and death, predominantly in summer rainfall areas) will be pleased to know that an 'alternative' control regime is being developed. The FAMACHA system, developed in South Africa, rates the degree of anaemia of each sheep according to the colour of the white of the eye. Only sheep with an advanced degree of anaemia need be treated with an anthelmintic. This saves producers money (fewer sheep to drench) and slows the development of resistance of worms to drenches. For more info, put 'famacha' into www.google.com

Aarm.

LAMB STEALING

For the last two years one of our pregnant ewes has stolen a lamb from a multiple birth when the mother was busy, and then rejected it as soon as she's delivered her own lamb. The first year we lost the lamb, but last year were more vigilant and were able to catch it before it became dehydrated and then bottle-fed it. Is this ewe a nutter or what? Should we get rid of her?

Andi Jenkins,
CASTERTON 3311.

Ewes do practise lambnapping and unfortunately the outcome usually isn't good for the victim. Surging hormones prior to giving birth obviously disturb this ewe and cause destructive flock behaviour. You will have noticed that your ewes choose a spot for giving birth. If the yard or paddock is small, it's difficult for ewes to go off and isolate themselves. Check that this isn't a factor in your situation. It could be third time lucky this year, but don't take a chance; remove the troublesome ewe if you can and relocate her to a paddock or pen on her own. Ewes like to get their birthing site selected a few days before delivering, so don't wait until the last minute to relocate the problem ewe, she may become very distressed and not settle. Get her organised a week or two ahead and ensure the fencing is strong or she may try and return. As sheep like company and become lonely on their own, see if you have an empty ewe or a wether that could be successfully put in with her. Good luck.

HELPFUL ARTICLES

As a new landowner I'd like to say how helpful I've found the sheep articles and the pieces on cattle. It's a bit scary being responsible for living creatures, but the simple, easy-to-read style of GR livestock writers makes acquiring information easier. I photocopy articles and keep them in separate species folders and then bore all and sundry with my newly acquired knowledge. Keep it up; 'real' info is so hard to find.

Scarlet Kenny,
FORBES 4078.

ECO NEWS

NATIONAL TREE DAY

Australia's biggest community tree-planting event happens again this year in July – School's Tree Day 29 July and National Tree Day 31 July. The day is organised by Planet Ark in cooperation with Toyota and AMP Foundation. In 2004 the event motivated about 250,000 volunteers to plant over 1.2 million shrubs and trees at 3195 sites across the nation. Since National Tree Day began in 1996 it has been the catalyst for the planting of over seven million trees, which have regenerated ecosystems damaged by erosion, salinity and droughts, and improved habitat for indigenous wildlife. Each year more schools are becoming involved and undertaking their own projects; it's a wonderful opportunity for children to learn about the environment and the concept of personal responsibility, and to see first-hand how their efforts can make a positive contribution. Schools and groups unable to participate on the designated days are encouraged to organise their event for an alternative time that suits local climate and other conditions.

To find out how to hold an event or where to find one you can participate in call 1300-885-000, or visit www.planetark.com/treeday

BUSH HERITAGE IN VICTORIA

In 2004 Bush Heritage acquired its first conservation property in Victoria. Situated near Wedderburn in north-central Victoria, the property encompasses 344 hectares and abuts other reserves of remnant habitat, bringing the total area of contiguous reserved land to over 7000 hectares. The property, known as the Judith Eardley Reserve, contains five vegetation communities listed as threatened in the state: grassy woodland, shrubby woodland, box ironbark woodland, mallee and hillcrest herb-rich woodland.

Despite past illegal firewood harvesting in an accessible part of the property, there are still hundreds of hollow-bearing trees, essential habitat for numerous fauna species, in the more rugged terrain. Extensive wildlife surveys have yet to be undertaken, but birds so far seen include hooded robins, brown treecreepers, black-chinned honeyeaters, southern whitefaces and diamond firetails, and other fauna spotted include yellow-footed antechinuses, eastern grey kangaroos and echidnas.

Tree planting at Newport Lakes, Vic.

To find out more about Bush Heritage or to make a donation phone: 1800-677-101, email: info@bushheritage.asn.au, or visit the website: www.bushheritage.org

NSW IN HOT WATER

The NSW Department of Housing has recently retrofitted solar hot water heating in a 40-plus-year-old 141-unit apartment block in Gladesville. Rheem Australia designed a centralised, gas-boosted system to replace the old individual heaters. The system has reduced the water-heating component of tenants' energy bills by about 50 percent per year and greenhouse emissions by 67 tonnes. Water use for the whole block is expected to be reduced by 2060 kilolitres per year, with better water pressure and less wait for the hot water to come through. Maintenance is streamlined by a monitoring system that automatically relays information to an engineer when faults occur. If the solar collection component is out of action, the gas boosters automatically cut in to ensure residents experience no interruption to supply. To date, the system has exceeded the expectations of both tenants and the Department and plans for further retrofitting projects are already being discussed.

KYOTO JUST THE START

The Kyoto Protocol, first signed in December 1997, came into force on 16 February this year. There is general agreement in scientific and 'green' circles that the protocol is only the first step in an ongoing process to reduce greenhouse emissions, and that, of itself, it will have little impact. Time lags in natural systems, and the length of time greenhouse pollutants already in the atmosphere take to break down mean that changes will continue for millennia after greenhouse gases stabilise.

Pre-industrial age levels of CO_2, for example, were steady at about 280 parts per million, in 1997 (when the protocol was drawn up) the level had reached 368 ppm, in 2004 it was 379 ppm. Many scientists agree that drastic cuts in CO_2 emissions of two-thirds or more will be needed to prevent the most extreme climate change scenarios from occurring. The more quickly the cuts are made the lower the CO_2 level at which the pollutants will stabilise in the long term. While a new stabilised CO_2 level of 450 ppm is talked of by many, it is widely accepted that 550 ppm is a more realistic outcome.

KING GEORGE WHITING AN ICON

The National Trust of South Australia has recognised the cultural importance of the King George whiting by proclaiming it to be, along with the Murray cod, a South Australian icon species. King George whiting is a favourite catch of both recreational and commercial fishers and scientists are concerned about populations declining through overfishing, poor water quality and loss of seagrass bed and reef habitats. This species can live up to 22 years and weigh as much as 4.8 kilograms. Over the past 10 years the commercial fishing sector has been downsized and size and catch quantity restrictions have recently been placed on recreational fishers.

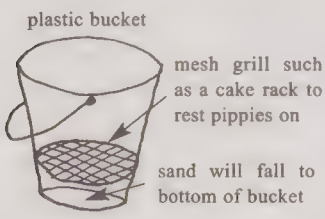
FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR,

Some time ago I asked for **WAYS TO USE PIPPIES** and since then I've received over 20 ideas, even from NZ and other places overseas. *Grass Roots* certainly gets around. I thought I'd share the info with other readers, if they are interested.

First, to catch your pippies, walk along the beach looking for masses of air bubbles just as a wave washes back out; this indicates a school of pippies just under the sand. Stand in the middle of the bubbles and wait for the next wave to wash over the area, then, as the wave wash is going back to sea, begin twisting your feet as if you are dancing the twist, this will bring the pippies to the surface. At some times of the year the pippies will only be babies and too small to eat. This may be a nursery school so you could try your luck for adults further along the beach waterline, or wait a few months.

Some people swore by putting the pippies into fresh water, others said to only use sea water to soak pippies in overnight so they get rid of all the sand. One said to have a mesh five centimetres up from the bottom of the bucket to rest the pippies on so any sand drops to the bottom – sounds sensible to me.



A New Zealander said to use fresh water with a cup of bran, soak and stir and leave for four hours, rinse well, put in a plastic bag and freeze for 24 hours. Open using a sturdy blunt knife on the hinge side of the shell and scrape the meat out and into a bowl.

In NZ they are limited to 50 pippies per person each catch. Some NSW respondents reminded me that catching pippies invokes a large fine from the rangers (if caught), unless you are of Koori descent and can prove it with a DNA test. In other states of Australia there is no such requirement.

I often get letters criticising the fact that my letters to GR don't go into more details. I am aware of this and I don't mean to write treatises, but to spark an interest that can be built upon. Further learning can be easily obtained these days on the internet or from a council library, if the need is there. I don't profess to be an expert on anything, as there are enough of those around already, real and imagined, even some experts on everything.

It's not the final destination that is important, but the fascination of the journey. You can learn something new every day and that's what makes life interesting. It's easy to take an idea and run with it, make it your very own.

Can anyone tell me why my tomatoes aren't growing very big? There are lots of them that pop out of the flowers, then go red and ripe, but very few get to the right size. The larger ones are being taken off the vines at night and I find them half-eaten on the ground, sometimes metres away from the vines. Whatever is doing this quite likes unripe as well as ripe tomatoes, it would seem.

The vines are watered every couple of days and from the seedling stage have been given Zest in the water every 10 days. There are three quite different varieties, but all are behaving the same way. I usually have no trouble with tomatoes, but this year is different. Is the drought having an effect? They get mostly full sun all day. What's going on all you Einsteins out there?

Roberino,
PO Box 359, WOOLGOOLGA 2456.

Re the small tomatoes: If they are self-sown from hybrid plants, you will not get the parent plants propagating, but will have throwbacks to earlier generations, usually with quite small fruit. Try giving the Zest a miss and treating the plants to a yummy mix of organic fertilisers such as compost, decomposed manure and vermicompost. If you like using liquid fertilisers, try a seaweed solution, Charlie Carp, or one of the new organic soluble plants foods.

Dear Grass Roots Readers,

We are attempting to live as sustainably as we can on our small suburban block. Unfortunately, this has generated open hostility from one neighbour and a more general feeling of isolation. The proposed installation of a mobile phone tower just 300 metres away is the last straw. We have a 2½ year old daughter and would like her to grow up in an environment where many people share earth-friendly ethics. As we are in the early stages of investigating a move, we would greatly appreciate any **INFORMATION ABOUT COMMUNITIES**, multiple occupancies or areas where there are clusters of GR types.

Rob,
8 Ascot Pde, BLACKALLS PARK 2283.

Hello,

I am so surprised about the **HARDINESS OF AMARYLLIS** in Australia. My husband and I moved from Germany just a few months ago and found a really beautiful property with an old garden. But all was covered with weed mats, which I removed and replaced with a thick layer of pine bark mulch. I collected a lot of amaryllis bulbs and stored them in a cardboard box in the shed under a bench – a very dark place. What a miracle, after six or eight weeks they started to flower! Isn't that wonderful to see how nature overcomes bad conditions?

I'd like to give my thanks to Marjorie Bligh from Devonport. She wrote a Feedback letter (GR 165) and recommended a simple fruit cake that has only three ingredients. I made this cake and must say thank you so much for such a simple recipe with so much flavour and good taste. But instead of flavoured coffee milk (what is that?) I took the regular coffee milk in a can and it worked.

I have to learn a lot about Australian gardening and nature: it's a big challenge, but with the help of heaps of garden magazines I will succeed.

Ute,
325 Hydes Creek Rd, BELLINGEN 2454.

Dear Megg & Mary,

I am writing in anticipation that someone may be able to help me. I have been collecting soap recipes from GR for a little while now, but I am unable to find a recipe that is pH neutral as I have sensitive skin. I believe that you can reprocess the soap to achieve this, but I am unsure as to how to go about it and whether I would get the desired results?

Val, VICTORIA.

Soap is nearly always alkaline (pH reading higher than 7). Have you pH tested the soap you are making/using? If it is alkaline (high pH) you need to add an ingredient that is acidic (low pH). PH tests can be purchased from your local chemist. Try aging the soaps. Also try making olive oil soap and adding extra oil (olive oil is a mild acid). Last, try testing the soap before it is set and getting it to neutral by adding lemon juice. Any readers with suggestions about what to use and quantities? We'd love to know.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots Family,

Thank you to all who took the time to write to me from GR 166, particularly those who sent seeds. As we are now living on one income, we'd love to hear **MONEY-SAVING IDEAS** that people have that we may not have thought of. Also, we are interested in hearing from GR readers about starting up a vegie garden.

Yvette,
PO Box 28, NEWSTEAD 7250.

Regarding money-saving tips Yvette, without knowing more about your situation we can only offer some generalisations. To begin with, check out your local resources and services: Libraries might have videos, free internet access, story-telling for kids, or a toy library. Are there playgroups or other free entertainments? Is there a food co-op or LETSystem? Your council might publish a booklet containing contact details for clubs, groups and local services.

If you have littlies, you could start your own playgroup and share toys, books and clothes with other members. Find and frequent op shops for numerous bargains. When buying new clothes wait for stores to have 20-percent-off or end-of-season sales and stock up. If you are at home with time to do so, grow, bake, preserve and sew your own as far as possible – get the children involved as well.

You will find books on vegie growing in the library; it's cheapest to grow from seeds (check out the Diggers ad on page 13 of this issue for a great offer), but some seeds are harder to propagate than others, so, to begin with, buy punnets of seedlings and share them with a friend if there are too many for you.

Petrol is expensive, so plan outings to do as many jobs as possible in one go; use public transport if it's feasible for you; find fun places to visit close to home; carpool if you have children to drive to a bus stop or to school.

GR back copies are full of money-saving ideas – borrow some from the library. Try to get hold of our book – Living Better For Less – *it's out of print, but a reader might have a second-hand copy you can buy. Good luck, and do let us know how you get on. We'd love readers to send in their best money-saving tips.*

Dear GRs,

After many years of being without our own place, we are now in the process of developing our orchard and gardens. This year we will probably have our first taste of fresh fruit, but not enough to make jams or preserves. Next year!

We are looking for large types of **BAMBOOS** to grow for later use in fencing and building, and **PERENNIAL FOOD PLANTS** for the vegie garden. Do any readers have growing shoots of useful bamboos, or cuttings, bulbs or seeds of food plants to spare? Of course, I will be happy to pay the postage; just let me know first what you have before sending them. I trust this year will bring you all many blessings.

Lorraine Zinnack,
PO Box 309, KINGSCOTE 5223.
Email: farmlink@bigpond.com

Hi Everyone,

It's taken me six long years, but I have finally graduated as a primary school teacher. I wonder if there are any teachers out there who are close to retirement and would like to see their **TEACHING RESOURCES** put to further good use by a beginning teacher. If so, contact me. Also, if anyone has any good practical **EDUCATIONAL IDEAS** for primary children, I would love to hear about them. Any fabulous books I should have? I will start working hard next year to raise the funds for that farm I've been hankering after for many years (I have a long-term plan).

Lisa Cooper,
56 Mahogany Cres, GATESHEAD 2290.
Email: pelicanfeathers@yahoo.com.au

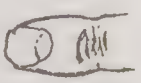
Congratulations Lisa and best of luck with your new career. Have you come across educational kinesiology? It's a method of engaging both hemispheres of the brain and is a wonderful tool for primary school age children, but also has benefits for adults. There are several books available.

Dear Megg & Friends,

I tried everything over a period of 50 years to **CURE TINEA** (antibiotics, metho, ointments, red stuff, purple stuff), with no success. At times it was intolerable. I may even have traces still, but it's no trouble now since I started going barefoot outdoors whenever possible. Paddling in the sea is probably beneficial, but I don't do that often enough to consider it essential.

Bill Fitzgerald,
7 Eagle St, VICTORIA POINT 4165.

Hello,



For many years I have suffered with a **FINGERNAIL INFECTION**, which turns the nail white and is very sore. My sister also suffered from this for many years. She had a few of her fingernails removed, but the infection returned. Around five years ago she was living in an area where she came in contact with people who milked cows. One of these people informed her that the infection was common among people in this profession and they used a cream to kill the infection. She used the cream and to this day has had no sign of the infection. Only one problem, she has forgotten the name of the medication. I wonder if any readers might know about this treatment as I am very anxious to cure my infection. Would much appreciate hearing from anyone who can help me.

Lyn Peterson,
17 Washbrook Cres, PETRIE 4502.

Fellow Grass Roots People,

I love your interesting magazine, a pity to have to wait two months for the next copy. I am seeking information about long-term **STORAGE OF DRIED CHICK PEAS**, beans etc. Would bay leaves kept in with them deter the bugs? I'm also keen to make my own **RICE MILK**. Does anybody have recipes for this? My last request is about making **BEEF JERKY**; any readers have hints or successful ways to do this? All will be greatly appreciated. It's wonderful to have many like-minded people out there sharing their stories and ideas.

Ally Young,
46 Soden St, YEERONGPILLY 4105.

Dear Grass Roots Team,

In GR 123 from late 1997 was a letter from Stephen Walton of Clayfield in Victoria promoting **AN ORGANISATION CALLED NATURE. NATURE**, it was claimed, sought to effect social change through the promotion of sustainable, ecologically sound development by practical example and the dissemination of information.

Unfortunately, Stephen has moved now, but is **NATURE** still with us? We hope so and would like to hear from anyone who knows of this group. The present system has been going since the end of World War II and all the economic and social indicators are in decline There has to be a better solution to society's problems that provides a sustainable, equitable and satisfying answer.

Doug Blackwell,
'Stony Hill', 3007 Merriwa Rd, GUNGAL 2333.

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Hi to all,

I have been **A KEEN SCAVENGER** for many years, salvaging items from kerbside throw-outs, garbage tips and even waste bins on occasion. Most of these items I pass on to friends who may be looking for a particular item, or revamp them and donate to charity. The odd gem I have kept and made into a recycled sculpture for the garden or some other creation.

I am keen to do a bit of scavenging **IN THE SYDNEY AREA**, and hope to meet up with others of the same mindset. If you have a car, that's great; if not, no problem. Even if you are not in the Sydney area, please feel free to email me re your experiences, thoughts, whatever! I will pass on my contact address details when you contact me by email. Peace and happiness!

Katherine,
Email: katherinejane@aapt.net.au

Katherine, we'd love to see some pics and instructions for some of your projects.

Dear Grass Roots,

Thanks for such a wonderful magazine, I look forward to reading it every issue. I have recently moved to Tasmania and have purchased a lovely 150-year-old mountain cottage, with solar power and gravity-fed water supply. I'd like to find out more about **HOMEMADE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS** and **COMBUSTION STOVES**. I'd also love to correspond with like-minded people in Tasmania (or interstate) to share ideas on country living and self-sufficiency.

Stu 34,
PO Box 14, HAMILTON 7140.

Dear Grass Roots,

I congratulate you on the excellent resource that your magazine is. G'day to everyone out there. This is the first time I've put pen to paper for ages. I am a 43-year-old mum and proud of raising three boys: almost 20, 17 and a 10-year-old who has **ASPERGERS AUTISM HIGH FUNCTIONING SYNDROME**. I need to hear from anyone with information on Aspergers – organisations etc. I have schooled my son for four and a half years – last year was a gruelling time for him and me.

Does anyone need information on recycling, how to budget (no matter what walk of life or work) and have some control on where money goes, how to make the cents go further? I am an artist (drawing) and also do crochet, lacework, hand-sewing, cooking and gardening and collect stamps and coins.

I am a carer also, registered with CALM (Conservation and Land Management) and have a pygmy possum female in my care.

I need to hear from like-minded people, which I've noted most of your readers are, with similar interests. There's not much I haven't done, or tried or am doing. I have a sense of humour.

I am not 100 percent physically fit, although after a disc removal in the lower back partly paralysed my left side I still managed to walk about six kilometres or more to pick up a gift for my son on a very hot day. Reckon I'm fit to be tied.

I defy most doctors. I keep moving. All things get stiff from no use. I know I cannot go sky diving or jogging in a fitness race, but I can do a heck of a lot or give it a go and see. To all those out there hindered by whatever ails you – where there is a will, there is a way.

Winifred M McDonald,
PO Box 1026, ESPERANCE 6450.

Dear GR,

Thank you for a fantastic magazine, I have drooled over other readers' stories for many years. Finally, I made the move two years ago to my seven-acre property in Warburton. I am very happy in my solar-powered mudbrick, with my chooks, vegie garden, new fruit trees and just completed glasshouse.

I'm kept very busy and am developing lots of new skills: carpentry, chainsawing, fencing and now welding. I'm hoping to make garden sculptures once I master the art of oxyacetylene welding, which brings me to the purpose of this letter. Does anyone out there in GR land have a book on oxyacetylene welding? I am very happy to pay for it, but just can't locate one anywhere – not even Amazon has one in stock – plenty of general welding, but not specifically oxy.

My other problem is bracken fern. Does anyone know how to get rid of it? I'm hoping to get some goats this year, but my place is overrun with bracken and I know it's poisonous to animals. I whippersnipper it down as much as I have time for, but it pops up faster than I can deal with.

This life is wonderful, full of purpose and joy, each step forward is like winning the lottery, but I do get lonely sometimes. I am a 50-year-old girl doing it on her own and would love to hear from others in similar situations to swap stories. Maybe we could start a support group for women driven crazy by generators, pumps, chainsaws and all things mechanical, which refuse to start despite all sorts of maintenance, TLC and copious amounts of swearing.

Anyway, lots of love to you all – keep on keeping on.

Lynne Prior,
PO Box 280, WARBURTON 3799.
Email: thepriors@dodo.com.au

Lynne, sounds like you've been on a very steep learning curve – we're very impressed. For a book on oxyacetylene welding try Lyle at Trendline Publishing: 02-9809-1438, they publish a lot of how-to booklets. Do readers have any other suggestions?

Persistence is the key with bracken control; frequent mowing or slashing or rotary hoeing will eventually (over several years) succeed. Also try liming the paddock – bracken prefers acid soil. It's apparently the new fronds that are most poisonous to stock, so the paddock can be grazed at other times.

Hello GR & Earth Lovers,

I love the magazine and never miss an issue, I read and reread old magazines constantly when I want to dream about a rural lifestyle. I have learnt so many wonderful new ideas, from cooking to making crafty things – thank you to everyone who shares all this information.

The reason I am writing this letter is in the hope there is someone out there who can help us in our search for a **HAPPIER, HEALTHIER AND MORE PEACEFUL LIFESTYLE**. I am a retired mental health counsellor (stressful occupation), my husband is a music teacher and woodworker, our daughter and two sons are grown up and have left home to start their own life journeys.

We would like to hear from someone who has a bit of isolated bushland we can live on; we are happy to live in a renovated shed for the time being. Or maybe there is a farming family who would benefit from employing us to work on the land in return for a rent-free house with some land attached. We both have international police clearance certificates, are nonsmokers and lead a quiet lifestyle.

We would appreciate some suggestions on where to start looking so we can change from being unsettled to a more meaningful life on a bit of earth we can call our own, maybe enjoy having chickens, perhaps milking a cow, growing vegetables and living as much as possible close to the earth.

May all beings find peace in their hearts and freedom in their minds.

Stephanie & Phil Mendel,
182 Tonkin St, MUNDIJONG 6123.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I would like to know if there is a safe and natural way to **REMOVE NEMATODES** from my vegetable garden. I have been reading *Grass Roots* magazine for the past 20 years. Keep up your good work.

Martin Welch,
7 Kardella St, ASHMORE 4214.

*Start by increasing the organic matter in your soil by adding compost and mulch. Either nematodes dislike soil rich in organic matter or there are more beneficial predators in such soil. Rotate crops. Plant marigolds (*Tagetes *spp) and dig them into the soil.* Crotalaria spectabilis *and pango grass are both said to control nematodes. Try dousing the soil with solutions of sugar, molasses or seaweed emulsion in water.*

Dear Megg, Mary & staff,

I haven't written for a while but lots has happened. We shifted in November onto a larger block. Due to vegetation/tree clearing land restrictions our previous block had become useless for a grazing enterprise, so we sold it and purchased another block more suitable to cattle grazing. We are still in the Miles area and now have 218 acres, which is all white on the vegetation map, so we can do what we like with it. It came with an old Queenslander house and various sheds and has previously been selectively cleared and planted with improved pasture. Now we will be able to bring our cattle home from agistment, where they've been for nearly 18 months.

I had a laugh at your **MUSHROOM FARM ANTICS** (GR 165) Megg. We were looking at fungus and bacteria last year at school, so got a mushroom kit. Ours also looked weird with lots of white mouldy stuff, but then the mushrooms grew. One was nearly 24 centimetres across so we looked up the *Guinness Book of World Records*, but it wasn't quite record-breaking. We tipped it upside down, broke off the stem, topped it with shredded ham, cheese and tomato slices – mushroom pizza! The kids thought it was okay. We also ate others as mushrooms on toast. The kit produced enough to feed 28 kids four times so was quite productive. We kept it in a large drawer in a bench in the classroom and watered it when we remembered (sometimes over-watered and sometimes under-watered I think).

Thanks for the information about my blind chook. So far she's still going strong, though she often walks round in circles and seems to get dizzy. Then she'll sit down and she's fine again.

Karen Long,
PO Box 46, MILES 4415.

To the Editor,

My wife and I have been readers of your very informative magazine for many years. We have especially enjoyed the experiences of people wanting to get closer to nature. We moved onto our little 80-acre farm early in 1975 and I thought that **OUR EXPERIENCE MIGHT BE OF INTEREST** to readers. Maybe our story will help motivate others to take their children out of the cities so they can find something closer to nature to absorb their minds.

We moved to this bare block with our five children, three girls and two boys, the youngest only a few months old all those years ago. No water, no fencing, no buildings, but we did have beautiful mountains on the southern and western sides to protect us from the southerly winds that blow, even up here in Queensland, in the winter. There was some good softwood scrub soil that had been cleared years previously for dairying and when we came along was covered with lantana, which protected and built up the soil very well. Some forest country covered with timber suitable for building and fencing made up the remaining area, together with a mountain stream that flows in the wetter part of the year.

We have a beautiful view to the north and the city of Gladstone was an hour and a half away on a gravel road in those days (all sealed now). We started off with a small shed and a tent, depending on rainwater for our needs (which were determined by the amount of water in the tank). We had a lot of hope for the future and the soil proved to be very fertile, growing pawpaws, bananas, avocados, mangos and custard apples as well as all the vegies we needed. We siphoned water down from the creek, which solved our water needs for six months of the year on average.

Our biggest mistake was when we bought some bush goats for milking before we had any proper fencing, but we persevered and Betty milked them and even sometimes separated the milk and made butter as well. We had a good fence around the garden and orchard area so we didn't have the goats in the garden, but getting them home every night to protect them from the dingoes was a bit of a chore. Now we only have a small mob of Angoras to keep the grass down and supply mohair for spinning and weaving.

We had some bee hives as well right from the beginning, which were always a good supplement to our income. We have a workshop for woodwork and have supplied furniture to shops, or sold it direct to the public as another part of our income.

To improve our access to underground water we purchased our neighbours' 80 acres and now have everything we need, including some open country to run a few quiet horses on, as well as an extra house to rent to the public. Yes, we no longer live in a tent; we are all set up now and very convenient. With a lot of expense we found adequate underground water, which we now pump up to the hill to use in the drier part of the year, which helps to keep the place looking like paradise. Our children have all grown and flown and are successfully doing their own things in other parts of the country, but they were all home this year at Christmas time, which was a real delight.

If you are looking for somewhere to live only 13 kilometres from the village of Ubobo, and maybe would like to become a part of Horseshoe Valley Cottage Industries by doing pottery or any other type of small industry, or just want to come for a look before you make the move to the country, you are most welcome to come and see for yourself the benefits of country living, not just for the children but for peace and security as we grow older.

Betty & Dennis Martin,
Harmony Farm, UBOBO 4680.
Ph: 07-4974-1267, fax 07-4974-1262.

Dear Readers,

I qualify for parole on 3 May 2005 and wish to know if there are any **COMMUNITY GARDENS IN THE REDFERN AREA** (or inner city) that I could attend while on parole. I am sure I saw a garden in an issue of GR. I hope someone can help me.

Florence Vorhauer,
Mim 302530, LMB 25 B Ward East, METRAVILLE 2036.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to thank the readers who posted me **STAMPS FOR NORTH ROCKS SCHOOL** for Deaf and Blind. Most of them were answered, but a few had no return address. Thank you.

Mrs E Saul,
Linden Ln, SHERWOOD 2440.

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR & Readers,

I have only just discovered your bountiful mag, and thank goodness! Well done GR! I am keen to share with other like-minded readers the connection I feel towards Mother Earth and our animal friends. So much so that I would like to form an organisation dedicated to the **CARE OF SICK, ABUSED OR ABANDONED ANIMALS**. We would each purchase an equal share in a suitable rural property and live as a caring community, while endeavouring to accomplish a GR lifestyle. I have many positive and sensible ideas regarding building design (to be constructed perhaps with the help of a government grant), perpetuating goodwill, fund-raising activities and awareness through inspiration. As a creative writer I am more than willing to live my philosophy by contributing my personal projects for the benefit of the cause. If you too would like to use your life to help make a difference, I would love to hear from you and anyone who can offer constructive suggestions.

Justine,
23 Plum St, FRUITGROVE 4113.

Dear GR Readers,

On reading 'The Art of Baby Wearing' (GR 167), I decided that a **SLING** would be the ideal transport for my soon-to-be-born baby. I would dearly love to have a go at making my own. Are there any readers who would be able to help me out with a **PATTERN**, as I have so far been unsuccessful in my search?

Jessica Deller,
189 Church St, MANIFOLD HEIGHTS 3218.

G'day Grass Roots People,

My name is Bryson and my wife is Helen, both retired. We live on five acres in the hills **BETWEEN NANANGO AND KINGAROY**. We grow most of our own vegetables and some fruit (all without chemical input). We have owned our place for about 15 months, but have only lived here for eight months. Before settling in we went on an around-Australia trip for seven months. Now we are back and have been hard at work setting our place up as we want it to be. That is, clean, green, productive and able to look after itself for short periods of time (still need to get away at times).

The main reason for writing is to find other **LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE IN OUR AREA**, as we know very few. It would be good to get together with others to share ideas or swap or trade produce or just chat over a cuppa. So, if you are like us and would like a couple more like-minded friends, give us a call, no obligations, only friendship. Please keep it clean, green and productive.

Help! I have just harvested my potato crop and didn't even get enough, weight-wise, to match the seed I planted: four kilograms seed and three and a half kilograms harvested. Why? There were nice healthy tops, but nothing below ground. Why? We get a good return on most crops for little effort. Our block has a north-easterly slope, the soil is red loam and free draining. The only addition to gardens is mulch of lucerne hay mixed with goat droppings. The mulch is up to 12 months old before being put on gardens. So why can't we grow spuds? This is not our first failure with potatoes.

B & H Huddleston,
Ph: 07-4164-7292.

Bryson, possibly the combination of goat manure and lucerne hay is too high in nitrogen – hence the healthy leaves and no spuds underneath. Try using compost made from a mixture of ingredients and mulching with a material a bit higher in carbon – such as straw or organic sugar cane mulch. Your soil might need more potassium, which can be added by way of wood ash, granite dust, potassium chloride, or potassium sulphate if your soil or water is saline. Root crops in general have a high potassium requirement and potassium leaches from manure left to age. Good luck and keep us posted.

Dear Readers,

I am a male, 65 years old, alone and lonely. Being alone, life can be very hard. It could be even harder for women on a farm with no one to help you when you need help, no one even to talk to. Even if you have people around you, you still might need someone to talk to. I think talking, just talking, to someone willing to listen, understand and help is the single most important of all needs. Particularly when you have worry, problems or needs. And even if it is not enough, talking is the first step in solving problems or fulfilling our needs.

The solution could be to form an **EXCLUSIVE FAMILY-LIKE GROUP** with such interested readers. The main aim is not financial support, but mutual support and help in solving and fulfilling personal problems and needs. There are many forms of organisations and relationships and it will be up to us to choose one that will suit all members, or different ones for different members. One such idea, which could suit some members, is not to permanently live together, but each of us live in our own place, retain our own independence, communicate by phone, mail or email, and visit and spend time together when we wish or need it. That way you do not lose or disrupt anything in your life, but just add what is missing, without waiting for ages for a perfect condition that might never happen. Any interested readers of all ages, 18 – 60+, are welcome to contact me.

Zvoy,
PO Box 251, WAUCHOPE 2446.
Email: zvoy@hotmail.com

Dear Megg & Readers,

A little while back a reader requested a recipe for mint sauce. No doubt she received many replies, but I would like to submit the following, which is very good and little trouble to make.

To make **MINT JELLY** dissolve one packet lime jelly in a one cup of boiling water. Add one cup of vinegar and half a cup of chopped mint. I have often been helped by the kind readers of GR and help others when I can.

Mrs B Jenkins,
Barnett Cres, BRIDPORT 7262.

Dear GR,

Please help. I have an immensely trainable **DONKEY** that I want to teach to **BOND WITH AND PROTECT CHICKENS**. How do I begin? Currently he lives in a part of a large grassy paddock, sectioned into his allotment by a single electric tape approximately 60 centimetres off the ground. Sheep and a goat sometimes graze around him and none dares to enter his area – ever.

Jane Brooks,
30 Woolrich Rd, OLINDA 3788.

Dear GRs,

I'd like to see more information on **MANAGING AS YOU GROW OLDER**; strategies people have found that work for them, such as getting some outside paid help for window cleaning so that the job is off your mind and you can enjoy or attend to work that you just have to do yourself.

Machines in and outside the home that are real time and labour savers would make a good article, as would legal and insurance problems when friends and relatives offer to help.

I & H Beilharz,
BROADFORD 3658.

Anyone with info relevant to the above?

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I agree with D Whybrum (GR 167) who urges J McShane not to force her **VEGETARIAN LIFESTYLE ON HER DOG**. Dogs are basically carnivores, but fortunately for us, our modern dogs eat all kinds of food, so I would like to suggest a compromise which has kept my dog Lucy fit and healthy for the past two and a half years. The recipe makes a month's dinners for a 20-kilogram dog, but you can make smaller lots if you prefer. I use a large stockpot. The roo meat is very lean and the vegetables are often leftovers and trimmings from the household that I keep in a bag in the freezer and once a month I use them all up.

Put three kilograms diced roo meat, one and a half kilograms mixed roughly chopped vegetables (anything except onion), two to three cloves crushed garlic and a slug of olive oil in a large pot with water, to about three-quarters of pot. Cook till vegetables are cooked. You can skim off the froth, but I never bother. Then add two cups small pasta and two cups rice. Cook till done, stirring occasionally. When rice is cooked, add one to one and a half cups quick-cook oats and one cup semolina or polenta. You can add more water to make a bigger portion if you like. Stir constantly till thickened. Pan should be full. Cool slightly and fill into five cheap plastic lunch boxes. Cut contents of each box into six thick slices, one per day with a couple of handfuls of dry food. Apart from a couple of dog biscuits as treats during the day, Lucy gets nothing but her dinner and she is fit and healthy, with perfect bowels, clear eyes and shiny coat and plenty of energy. I hope this helps J McShane. I forgot to say that I freeze the boxes till I'm down to the last serving of the previous one. A box thaws in the fridge over a couple of days, so you need to remember to take it out.

Junta Hines,
CUMBERLAND PARK 5041.

Dear GR,

We hope everyone had a wonderful summer. Our thoughts are with those who were not as lucky as we were!

We have finally made our move to our block and are now slowly working towards our dream. Currently we are living in a one-room weekender. We have a wood stove in fair condition and a stainless steel sink. We plan to extend a small way to give us a bit more breathing space. There is one water tank in place, with two more to be fitted up.

We currently use a 12-volt camping shower in a 20-litre bucket. They don't use much power and are easy to set up. The hardest part is heating the water. We are looking for a low pressure hot water service chip heater. We have a 200-litre drum on the roof of the shower, which will supply us with enough pressure for a hot water service.

We have a Nature Loo compact, composting toilet. The cost was comparable to, actually cheaper than, a septic and toilet. It was not difficult to set up and we have encountered no problems. We run the fan via 12 volts and we have no problem supplying adequate power.

Our only power is from 12-volt batteries and a generator. The solar power components are slowly being purchased. We have been using kerosene lanterns supplemented with a gas lantern. Our pressure lantern, a tilly, won't work. It is pressurising, but not getting the pressurised kerosene through. We have cleaned it, but with no success. Any ideas on that one would be a great help.

We are using a gas fridge, after a lot of problems. We prefer the Electrolux fridges, just no success with other types of gas fridges. For other interested folks who wish to go to 12 or 240 volts the best of these fridges we saw was the IndelB. Evakool is the company that supplies these fridges and freezers. We are saving for a freezer now. Any satisfied or not-so-satisfied users? We'd like the feedback.

I am washing our laundry in 20-litre buckets. I did entertain the possibility of doing the washing in the petrol cement mixer, but my imagination got the better of me! I must say it is going better than expected. We are looking for an old wringer machine or a twin tub. We have a stationery motor that is going to be put to use as backup for our power supply and also to drive the washing machine, pulleys and belts.

We are enjoying the change in lifestyle, which shows it is never too late. I am managing very well as long as I pace myself. It's interesting to note that my pain levels have dropped and my mobility has improved. I am not the only one who has noticed a difference. More on our life change in a later installment.

For those who have been writing re **TICK PROBLEMS**: We had a severe tick problem when we first moved to our last address. We gave our dog fresh garlic in his meals, also made up a spray bottle with a small amount of shampoo and tea tree oil. This we would spray on his feet when the ticks were very bad. For the yard we first of all sprinkled lime (gardening type) and watered this in, then used Dynamic Lifter around the yard. Sulphur was placed in sleeping places and dry spots, but it can irritate pets' skin. I used the tea tree oil mix inside the house. This did not totally eradicate the ticks, but greatly reduced them. We had to stop other animals visiting as well as alternating sleeping areas. These measures, and good rain, eradicated the ticks. It also got rid of fleas. Good luck!

Anyone who would like to correspond with us re any of the above, please do.

Ray & Terry Campbell,
409 Coverty Rd, COVERTY 4613.
Email: rayterry@bigpond.com

Dear GRs,

Re **VEGETARIAN FOOD FOR DOGS**: I once had an obese German Shepherd who had been spayed and, while a moderate eater, would not lose any weight. On the advice of her veterinarian we started adding grated raw carrot to her diet (with a small sprinkle of Parmesan cheese), gradually reducing the home-cooked meat and vegie diet and replacing it with the carrot (and a raw egg twice a week) in two-thirds to one-third proportions. In four months she lost 12 kilograms to bring her to a healthy weight, with no loss of condition. Heart rate and respiration improved, as did her arthritis. She lived to a ripe old 14 years and died in her sleep.

To make **GOOD DOG BISCUITS**: two eggs, one cup vegie oil, parsley, 200 grams chopped cooked liver, peanut paste (big blob), 1 clove garlic, 20 grams chicken or vegie stock, plain flour sufficient to make a dough. Whisk eggs, add oil and whisk it in. Combine all ingredients (except flour), mix together then add flour until a dough is formed. Knead to mix well. Roll out to six millimetres thick, score into approximately 19-centimetre squares, then bake at 300°C until light brown (about 10 minutes). Break apart when cool and store in an airtight jar.

Thank you to Diane French (GR 167) re insomniacs. Can hardly wait to get the catalogue from Sleepless No More. Being a shift worker, most of it night shifts, as a fire-fighter and Oz Post driver and truckie, my metabolic clock is reverse to most people's. Can sleep well during the day, but hardly at night.

Bob Ingle,
13 Lawley St, COLLIE 6225.

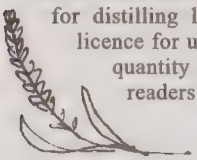
Anonymous letters will not be published. Please indicate if you would like personal details to be withheld.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I just love your magazine and have read it off and on for quite a number of years.

In an issue, I can no longer remember which number, there was an advertisement for a **HOME DISTILLATION PRODUCT** for distilling lavender oil. The product did not require a licence for using at home and would produce a reasonable quantity of oil. I would appreciate any information readers might be able to provide in regard to this request.



Betty Jose,
22 Arnold St, NHILL 3418.

Dear GR Staff & Readers,

Could we please have an article on **CHARCOAL SAFES**? Apparently, in the early part of last century the Queensland Railway used to use charcoal safes to keep their food cool in the country.

Thank you Nevin Sweeney for your article in GR 167. I have some figures for you for Coolgardie safes and canvas waterbags, which you may be interested in: 36°C outside, 23°C inside safe; 25°C outside, 18°C in safe; 16°C outside, 13°C in safe.

In December 1860 Burke and Wills checked the temperature in a waterhole; it was 36.3°C, after pouring the water into a canvas waterbag the temperature dropped to 25.5°C, very similar to the Coolgardie safe temperatures and they both work on the same principle. Years ago I compared a plastic-lined coolite water bottle with ice in the water, against a canvas waterbag on the front of the car; after two hours the waterbag was the coolest.

Jack Miller,
2850 Old Cleveland Rd, CHANDLER 4155.

Anyone have any info about charcoal safes? Send it in, we'd love to know.

Dear Grass Roots,

I am grateful for the power of the pen. Since my previous letter in GR 166 I have received much encouragement and many ideas. **SPECIAL THANKS TO** E Watts, M Jones, L Bell and P Ferguson. I have been inspired and am looking to move to Willunga, SA. There's a great Steiner School for Joshua, a permaculture group (Willunga Basin) for my love of the land, a regular growers' market for local community and yummy organics. I have started to embark on a degree in naturopathy for self-wellbeing and future employment. Again, many thanks and keep up the good work. It is wonderful how much happiness and warmth a letter can bring.

Pamela Bruce,
PO Box 538, BRIGHTON 5048.
Email: pbruce@daelibs.com.au

Dear Grass Roots,

We are three families looking to **RELOCATE OURSELVES ON JOINT LAND**, at the moment the question being where. I thought I might seek some suggestions from the GR community, offering some of our wishlists as a guide: Temperate climate (as opposed to extremes), but we're not opposed to distinct seasons. Currently in Tassie, we find the long periods of cold a bit much and the wind is particularly annoying. Of course, we particularly like mid to north NSW coastline, or inland a bit in Queensland. We desire property with water (suitable for both power and consumption) in a bush setting. Access to GR/community/Steiner schools is a huge attraction as we all have young children (and issues with mainstream 'education') and any community groups encompassing eco-values, creativity and/or spirit are always welcome. We don't think we're asking for much, just a beautiful, appreciated environment in which to raise and nurture our families. We look forward to your suggestions.

Email: merriness@ozemail.com.au

Dear GR Gang,

Love the mag. I would like to know if anyone has any idea of where I can buy a thing to make paper bricks for the fire. I have more newspapers than I can put on the garden at the moment. I assume I need a mould and a tamper? Any thoughts would be appreciated. Contact me via *Grass Roots*.

Jenny Murchison.

Jenny, we covered this process briefly in Living Better for Less. *The writer, Stephen Legge, found the process more difficult than it was worth, however. He used a brick-sized steel box with the base and top perforated to allow excess water to drain out. Pressure was applied to the top to compress paper and expel water. The paper had to be shredded and soaked first to produce a soggy mass. Each brick was left in the sun for several days to dry before it could be removed, then left to dry for several weeks before it could be used as fuel. Stephen suggested an alternative method: soak a bundle of old papers, roll them tightly into a log of chosen size, wrap in string (natural fibre only) the length of the log, then leave to dry thoroughly. The string can be removed and reused on another log or burnt with it. Do readers have any experience with this? Devices for making paper logs are sometimes seen in mail order catalogues. The last address we have is: Innovations, Private Bag 28, Frenchs Forest, NSW 1639. The price was $30 plus postage.*

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all the fascinating variety of articles in GR. It is a wonderful read that entices and shows who does what and how. The articles by Megg on the varieties of poultry breeds and their attributes are of particular interest because my family operated a small poultry farm many years ago.

Re the **WYANDOTTES**. Their yellow flesh may be a detraction if grown for the table. However, their beauty is a special attraction. A fascinating theme that has always intrigued me is the breeding of sex-linked crosses. Perhaps an article on that subject might be of interest to readers.

Another area I'd like to see further visited is the various methods of soil improvement, be it by mulch, fertiliser, compost or biodynamics, particularly in the smaller home garden. We are frequently told that Aussie soils are mainly poorer in both quality and depth than European.

Last request: I'm presently unable to help a friend in the USA who wants jam melon seed – neither Eden Seeds nor Green Patch Seeds list it in their current catalogues. Can anyone help?

Thank you again for the variety in subjects, please keep up the excellent work.

Roy,
81 Parkes St, OAK FLATS 2529.

We will follow up Roy's suggestion on an article on sex linkage in poultry. It is a breeding practice that makes use of the fact that some traits are passed to one gender of offspring and not the other. The practical use of this is breeding chicks that are sex linked, and can be accurately sexed at hatching from the colour of their down. It's fun to try and very useful for people who don't want to keep the male chickens.

As to soil improvement, how do readers around our diverse country build their soil up? There is an excellent book titled The Miracle of Mulch *by our very own Mary Horsfall which might be of interest to you. Another very good book is* Gardening Down-Under – A guide to healthier soils and plants *by Kevin Handreck.*

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots Readers,

At the moment I am eradicating undesirable weeds and plants as they raise their heads in my garden. I hope to propagate my garden with all types of **NATIVE FERNS** that will be the dominant feature of the whole garden. If any green thumbs out there have any collections of native fern spores of different types, I would love you to send me some by post and maybe I can send you something in exchange. Thank you.

Troy Delaney,
93 Bellevue Rd, FIGTREE 2525.

Dear Grass Roots,

Just received GR 166, from my daughter Heather Kozak, so I could read her article on page 52. The folding block Max is holding is a fascinating toy; I learnt to make it at a Country Women's Association craft day.

An **IDEA FOR BLOCKS** I used when my children were small (so many years ago) was to scrounge off-cuts of timber from cabinet makers and carpenters and boil the pieces in water with dye on food colouring.

My father tied a rope to an old cane washing basket and spent hours dragging grandchildren around the lawn.

Cardboard boxes can be boats, cars or cubbies, depending on size and the child's imagination; paper plates or circles of cardboard become the wheels, triangle pieces the sails if it is a yacht, rectangles for planes' wings.

Mrs Jennifer McLeod,
2 Wills Crt, SEBASTOPOL 3356.

Heather Kozak sent us the instructions for making the folding blocks – we'll be publishing it in a future issue of the mag.

Dear GR,

I found Moira Warr's article on **WATER DIVINING** (GR 167) quite encouraging. We have been having problems with a diminishing water supply over the last couple of years. We pump our water from a dam, which we share with our neighbour, but the springs are not keeping up with the increasing demands being placed on them.

I believe there is water about 30 metres down and I thought I would try to find an old site, which I'd had divined about 20 years ago by a water diviner. Strangely enough, by using bent welding rods I received a good indication of water in a particular spot. I gave the rods to my six-year-old grandson and he picked the same spot.

Now comes the hard part. We can't afford to have a hole bored and risk not finding water, so I decided to try drilling by hand. Another neighbour had a bore put down recently to about 20 metres and struck good water. I examined the tailings and it seems to be all clay of various colours. Have any readers had experience of **SINKING A BORE** to at least 20 metres in clay, either by hand or with tractor assistance?

The internet gives a wealth of information, but lacks details on construction of the various augers used. Water jetting may be an option also, but how do you construct a water-jetting auger? Anyway, I have plenty of time and it will probably keep me fit.

Dave Watkins,
RMB 80, VICTOR HARBOUR 5211.

To avoid unwelcome approaches writers may indicate any personal details they wish to be withheld. Don't forget to put preferred contact details at the *bottom* of your letter. Letters are accepted and edited at the discretion of the publishers.

Dear GRs,

Following a bathroom renovation I had two **GLASS SHOWER SCREENS** in reasonable condition sitting in my shed. How could I recycle them? I laid them on their sides and leaned them together pyramid-fashion. A piece of discarded carpet was placed inside and two triangles of scrap wood were cut to fit the sides. I hammered two star pickets into the ground at each end to stabilise the structure. I drilled a hole at the top of one panel at each end and threaded wire through the panel and into the star pickets at the top of each end.

The wooden sides have about five centimetres of their apex cut off to provide ventilation. I'm experimenting at this time and trying to determine whether excess moisture and heat is released at the open sides. A thermometer placed inside would be useful for determining how hot the interior is.

The **GLASSHOUSE** is aligned east-west, with the unfastened glass panel facing north. This side is opened up by dropping it onto the ground on sunny days and is closed again before sunset in cooler evenings. Much warmth is retained inside and is released when I open it up each morning. The heat can also be regulated by putting soft drink bottles full of water inside to heat up during the day in colder climes. In winter it might be necessary to keep it fully closed all the time to retain heat. Plants that I have housed there include aloe vera, cacti, spider plant, tropical fruits such as custard apples and tender seedlings.

The glasshouse is a practical design that doesn't take up much space on the lawn and can be easily moved to other positions as long as it is side-on to north to catch the sun.

Helen Bell,
4 Yawang St, BERKELEY 2506.

Dear Grass Roots,

Does anyone have any recipes for **HOMEMADE ICE CREAM** that stays soft like bought ice cream does?

Jocelyn Crab,
PO Box 302, ENMORE 2042.

Dear Lovers of GR & all things self-sufficient,

Thank you Megg and all the staff for a continuing fresh-air approach to life in all its forms. As life becomes more complex, it's refreshing that many still hold onto old-fashioned values of concern for others, thriftiness and good old common sense.

We have built a small two-bedroom mudbrick home, which we love. It's coolness in the summer is unequalled. We have a large open fire to heat our open plan lounge, dining and kitchen and also a slow combustion in the kitchen for cooking. We only ever use wood, but I find that even after I clean the fireplaces each day after use, if the house has been shut up for the day, when you come in the **SOOTY SMELL** is quite strong. Once you're in the house, you don't notice it, but I would like to know if there is anything I can use or do to stop that musty sooty smell from always being there. My husband and I love the open fire and want to keep using it. Please, can anyone help?

I have found the *Australian Women's Weekly MENU PLANNER* from 1989 very helpful. These were a series of small booklets that offered four weeks of balanced two-course family meals. I have No 1 (serves two) and use it every day. The meals are delicious, with minium preparation and no extra ingredients that sometimes can become costly. I ask anybody who has these cookbooks and no longer needs or wants them if they would be willing to either sell them to me, or send them as a love gift, for which I would be very grateful. They are no longer obtainable through ordinary channels.

Mrs Anne Batchelor,
Lot 3 McNeilly Rd, DROUIN 3818.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Readers,

Some would say that, despite greater environmental awareness, we've gone backwards socially since the 1960s, as evidenced by the breakdown of the traditional family and our 'me-istic' society. Perhaps it is time for us to rediscover the inner natural man and woman, and how we should be loving one another in the old traditional, even tribal, ways that worked, rather than all being reduced to the unisex terms of 'persons' and 'guys' and lonely 'individuals'. We have begun to build a community in Tasmania based on restructuring our lives according to the biblical pattern for men and women. We are finding that, for many, independence is another word for loneliness, and that most of us desire a simple life.

We are finding that there is a small number of men and women who seek a better way, not through competition between the sexes, but by enjoying the fruits of our natural differences. We have found that for true good change to take place discipline and commitment are needed and this is the very ingredient that has often been missing in communities, dating right back to the 1960s. Though our community is small at this stage, we invite those of like minds to link up, even if you don't intend to actually be part of the community. We can send you information that might help you in your life.

Edwin Morris,
Hope Hill Community, GPO Box 1927, HOBART 7001.
Ph: 03-6297-6124.
Email: hopehillcommunity@hotmail.com

Dear GR Readers,

Can anyone tell me where I can get a **CHINA PEAR TREE SEEDLING** from? It is a cooking pear.

For a stamped addressed envelope I will send anyone **PIE MELON SEEDS**, jam making only, either give away or swap.

To Linda Lodue in GR 162: **OKRA SEEDS** can be purchased from Select Organic (Eden Seeds). Their address is on page 77 of GR 167.

Kathy Palmer,
C/- Post Office, TORRENS CREEK 4816.

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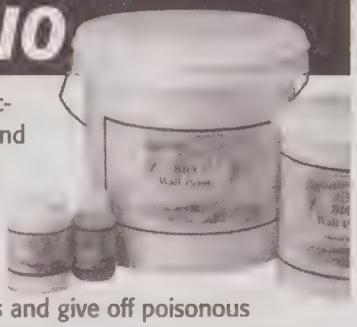

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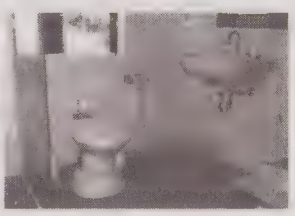

- Totally sealed - liquid overflow can be installed.
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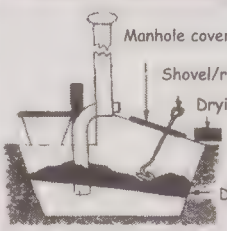
- No water needed.
- Ground level installations.
- New conveyer to move waste.
- Assembled quickly.
- No chemicals.



Backup fan needed for domestic applications.

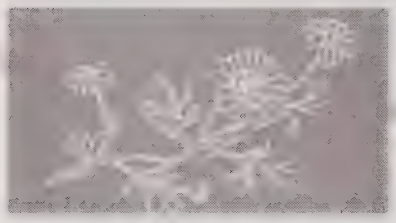
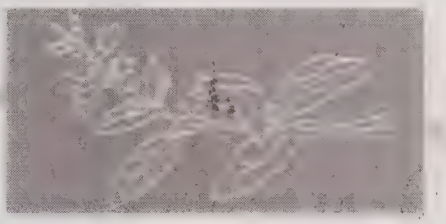
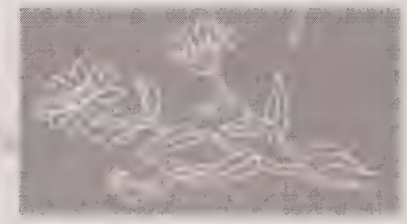
It is only the dried waste that requires removal after a few years. A shovel and container is all that is necessary.

For Further Information Contact
Sydney Head Office
Ph: 02-9456-0172, fax: 02-9456-0173
Agents: Brisbane 07-3256-2800
Cairns 07-4053-6131
Perth 08-9358-3600
www.enviro-options.com.au

Enviro Options Aust. P/L
ACN 083 573 340

Herbs For Mums And Bubs

by Deanne Wise, Seymour, Vic.

Having a baby is a special time, however, the first few weeks can be very trying as a mum gets to know this noisy little bundle while dealing with her own physical discomforts. Fortunately, help is at hand – as close as the garden. The following six plants are invaluable to the new mum. If you are pregnant, it is worth planting some now to ensure they will be at hand when you need them.

Although the plants suggested here are common garden plants or weeds, please only use plants that have been correctly identified. If you are not fortunate enough to have these plants in your garden, they are easily obtained from most plant nurseries. If fresh herbs are not available, dried herbs may be used. Health food shops should stock these.

CHAMOMILE

Chamomile is the queen of the nursery. Brew a tablespoon of flowers in a cup or two of boiling water and leave to cool. A couple of teaspoons is the remedy for a fretful, colicky baby or an overtired baby that will not settle. A cup of chamomile tea, packed with calcium and magnesium, will also help a mum relax. Then, when the little one begins teething, chamomile tea will reduce the pain and upset.

CALENDULA

A strong tea or infusion of calendula flowers can be used as a lotion to apply to nappy rash, cracked nipples or a surgical incision. Dab on with a soft cloth or wad of cotton wool and let air-dry. This herb tea can also be drunk to assist the cleansing and healing of the uterus and is valuable if there was any medical intervention needed during the birth such as forceps or a Caesarian.

NETTLE

Nettle tea is very high in the minerals iron, calcium and silica. For the new mum two or three cups a day will help to prevent the extreme exhaustion that often accompanies the first few months after the birth. Nettle tea will also assist in increasing the supply of breast milk. As a by-product hair and nails will grow long and strong.

SAGE

While some mothers struggle to produce enough breast milk others have an overabundant supply. Eventually this situation will settle, but is very uncomfortable while it lasts. Sage is the herb to take for painful engorged breasts. Take care though, this herb works so well you could end up with the opposite condition – not enough milk.

GERANIUM

Cracked nipples are a nightmare for a breast-feeding mum. Correct technique will prevent this, but often the damage is done before the technique is mastered. Apply the furry side of any common geranium leaf to the nipple for almost instant relief. It is quite safe to put baby to the breast directly after using geranium or calendula for cracked nipples, however, some babies do not like the smell of the plant, so it might need to be rinsed off before feeding.

LEMON BALM

By this stage both mum and baby should be relaxed and happy, but there will still be *those* days. Lemon balm tea is the drink of choice; it's a pleasant lemon-flavoured drink that will ease the stresses and weariness of motherhood.

QUICK GUIDE TO USING HERBS

Herb	Use For	Part Used
Chamomile (*Matricaria* spp)	Colic, teething, fretfulness	Flowers as tea
Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)	Nappy rash, cracked nipples, wounds	Flowers as lotion
Geranium (any species)	Cracked nipples	Leaves applied directly
Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)	Engorged breasts, too much milk	Leaves as tea
Nettle (*Urtica urens*)	Increasing breast milk, anaemia, tiredness	Leaves and stems as tea
Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)	Anxiety, tiredness, stress	Leaves and stems as tea

Pressing Flowers For Fun and Profit

by Gwen Deem, Cougal, NSW.

I've loved the old-fashioned art of pressing flowers for as long as I can remember, but it wasn't until I received a lovely card last Christmas, featuring pressed flowers, that I was spurred into action. I'm not exaggerating when I say that for me, it's been a life-changing experience.

Having been a keen vegetable gardener in the past, my passion now is growing ferns, flowers and plants that I can press. I'm surprised at how simple and economical this lovely craft is. It is very easy to become addicted. Whenever we go somewhere now I'm always on the alert for plants to press, so we have far more picnics and drives than we ever had in the past.

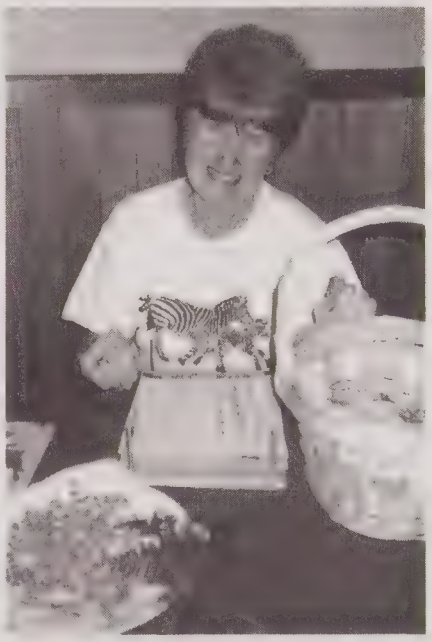
It didn't take long for Richard, my husband, to become interested as well. As soon as he discovered the pages of his beloved books interspersed with layers of papers, leaves and flowers he soon got cracking and made me a flower press. In fact he made seven; he's obviously not taking any chances of a repeat performance!

I think the personal touch is what makes the recipients of my cards and gifts appear genuinely delighted. Many have been keen enough to frame them and I'm now receiving orders, so perhaps it's not just politeness after all.

STARTING OUT

To get started you'll need a supply of flowers, leaves and ferns, really just whatever you fancy as creativity is the main element. Borrowing a book on card making from the library gave me lots of good ideas. A well-placed sticker can really complement a project and I tend to use the butterfly ones quite a lot, but one per card or project is usually plenty.

Heavy books are an ideal way to begin pressing your flowers, but because plants contain moisture you need to sandwich them between many



layers of blotting paper or newspaper or the book's pages can wrinkle.

Plants are best picked around midday, when all moisture has evaporated from them, and pressed as soon as possible. If you're out and about (perhaps raiding a friend's garden), a plastic bag can be used to pop the plants in. Just make sure you seal the top and keep it out of the sun, then press as soon as possible. Discard any that are too wilted.

When you're ready to start pressing, cut some newspaper to fit the book (or press) you'll be using. I use three to four sheets then place blotting or tissue paper on top. Place your flowers or leaves on tissue or blotting paper, making sure the petals or leaves are not touching. Cover with another tissue, add more layers of newspaper and place in the middle of the book. Put bricks or heavy books on top. Congratulations – you've just pressed your first flowers.

The book can be left undisturbed for six to eight weeks, but I've learnt that if you change the newspapers daily for a week, then three times during the next week, most materials will be ready in two weeks; only the really fleshy ones will take longer. This method has advantages: it preserves colour much better than the longer method (although some varieties of flowers will still fade) and, though it takes extra time, it is a task I really look forward to. I usually sit on the floor in front of the telly while doing it and always find it relaxing, rewarding and interesting.

If I'm looking forward to using a particular plant and the pressing has left the shape but not the colour, I touch it up using acrylic craft paint. I try to keep my projects as close to nature in colour and form as I can, but sometimes an addition is necessary to give the piece more life.

A SIMPLE FLOWER PRESS

A flower press makes the craft so much easier. Presses are simple and cheap to make and well worth the money and effort. You might have already made the one featured last issue.

For mine, we used a piece of 12-ply plywood plus four wing nuts, washers and bolts. The total cost was about $7. The ply was cut into two pieces measuring 30 x 30 centimetres, a hole was drilled in each corner, then a bolt, 12 – 15 centimetres long, was inserted and secured with a washer and wing nut.

MAKING CARDS

Ready-Cut

You can buy ready-cut cards at some craft stores, but I find it cheaper to make my own. However, if I want to create a card with a cut-out oval or rectangle on the front, I usually buy a ready-made as it's difficult to cut a neat edge using scissors. I use this type of card quite often to complement the floral designs.

Plain Card

The cheapest coloured plain card paper I've found is 40 cents a sheet; fancier paper costs more. From one A4 sheet I get two cards (by halving it) or one larger card. I keep my offcuts and use these for cutting a smaller shape to glue on top of the card I'm making as a contrasting background for the design. As purchased cards often cost up to $7, it's a real saving to make my own and have some fun in the process.

Sticky Situations

The first few cards I made had a rather unprofessional crinkly look, resulting from too much glue. 'Less is more' applies to many aspects of this craft. Too much glue will spoil the paper and too many flowers detract from the stunning simplicity of just a few or even a solitary flower. Too much time spent trying to reconstruct materials once glued ends in disaster. Expect some mistakes and learn as you go.

Once the materials are glued it's virtually impossible to move them without tearing, so make sure that you mark out how and where you want your design placed. Initially I used craft glue neat, but found it too harsh on transparent or delicate petals. Then I tried a mix of two parts glue to one part water and had much better results. I now use a stiffly beaten egg white for gluing on petals, with fantastic results. This won't work for sticking on heavier materials or gluing card or paper.

Problems In The Press

Mould and insects are the enemies; if detected remove that sheet from the press immediately and treat or discard.

PERFECT PLANTS FOR PRESSING

When pressing it's best to use plants of a similar thickness on each sheet so they are evenly pressed.

Ferns

Most ferns press well. Because I grow them, I mainly use maidenhair, hen and chickens, hare's foot, silver lady and native ferns. Fine ferns press beautifully and lend a delicate touch to most floral projects, but can be lovely used solo. The curling fronds of bracken press well and make an interesting addition to larger projects.

Flowers

Trumpet-shaped flowers are more difficult to press and need to be either halved then glued together after pressing, or have the head removed and pressed separately. If I want to press them intact, I make a cardboard 'collar', pop the flower in and press, collar and all.

Flowers that press well include Queen Anne's lace, delphinium, gypsophila, cosmos, marigold, daisy, lobelia, verbena, salvia, petunia, geraniums, impatiens, native violet, English violet, anenome, aquilegia, aster, phlox, polyanthus, daffodil, freesia, hyacinth, snowdrop, crocus and lavender.

The list is endless and time has not yet enabled me to grow and press all varieties, but the above have earned a reputation for pressing well.

Herbs

Parsley (triple curled), sage, hypericum and chamomile press well.

Grasses

Try pressing native grasses to give interest and height to projects, particularly larger items like mirrors, frames, pictures and gift boxes.

MAKE A LETTER HOLDER

Materials

You can buy a plain wooden letter or serviette holder from most craft stores. You will also need:

- craft glue
- pressed flowers and leaves
- paintbrushes
- craft paint or varnish
- clear finishing craft spray

Procedure

These instructions can be applied to many different projects, including wooden gift boxes, wall plaques and photo frames.

Give the wooden item a really good dusting to remove any spicks and specks. When it is totally clean apply a coat of paint or varnish. A second coat may be applied, depending on the finish you require.

When the paint or varnish is completely dry, begin to arrange the design. Using tweezers, place the leaves into the design and, when they are in place, add pressed flowers until the design is complete. I chose lavender, grevillea leaves and a paper daisy for just such a project.

Take time to study and remember the design. Any changes will need to be done at this stage as once the gluing begins the foliage and flowers will be ruined if moved.

Now finely mark the design on the surface, or draw a replica, because the next stage is to disassemble the design. Using a suitable craft glue begin to re-create the design. As before, assemble the background first and glue the leaves into place. Next glue on the flowers, taking care not to let the design look too bulky.

Continue in this manner until the design is complete. Finally, carefully apply your choice of permanent finish. If the foliage is woody, two coats of matte varnish might be needed as a top coat.

A NEW INTEREST TO LIFE

I have found my new 'old' craft fascinating, rewarding in numerous ways, calming and truly interesting. I hope others who may be interested will try this easy way of adding a new interest their life, while having fun and learning a little more of the beauty of nature.

For detailed instructions on how to make a flower press see Sharon Greenaway's article in GR 167.

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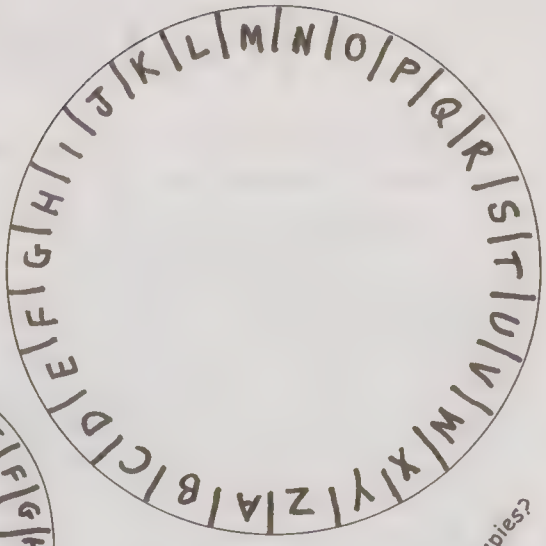
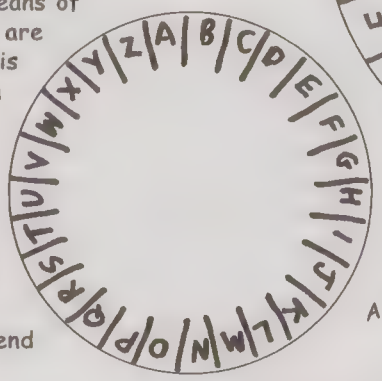
KIDS PAGE

SECRET STUFF



Throughout history people have attempted to keep secrets and uncover the secrets of others. Likewise kids have long been fascinated with the activities of spies and spying, from Nancy Drew to *Get Smart* and Indiana Jones. Careful observation and clever means of information gathering and protection are fundamental elements of spying and this page gives you some ideas for your own spy games with friends.



SECRET MESSAGES

Cryptology is the study of codes and cipher systems are secret ways of writing.
Share some of these with a friend and send secret messages.

The Caesar Cipher

Over 2000 years ago Julius Caesar invented a simple cipher system that has his name – the Caesar cipher. It shifts the alphabet forward three places to create a new alphabet for sending secret messages. So:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W

Morse Code

In 1837 Samuel Morse invented a code that uses dashes and dots to represent the letters of the alphabet. So:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
•–	–•••	–•–•	–••	•	••–•	––•	••••	••	•–––
K	**L**	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**	**Q**	**R**	**S**	**T**
–•–	•–••	––	–•	–––	•––•	––•–	•–•	•••	–
U	**V**	**W**	**X**	**Y**	**Z**				
••–	•••–	•––	–••–	–•––	––••				

Cipher Discs

The cipher disc was invented in Italy about 1470. It has one disc on top of another disc with the outer one representing the actual alphabet and the inner one representing the coded letters. It was widely used in the American Civil War and World War I.
To make your own cipher disc:
You will need:

cardboard
pen
scissors
glue or butterfly pin (butterfly pins will allow you to alter the lining up of letters and hence your code)

1. Trace the discs illustrated above onto cardboard.
2. Cut out and write letters on each disc.
3. Place the smaller disc on top of the larger one either with glue or a butterfly pin.

Q. Why do mummies make excellent spies?
A. They're good at keeping things under wraps.

OBSERVATION TRAINING

Improve your observation skills with these exercises.

Remember That Face

Cut out a range of photographs of people from newspapers and magazines and place in a box. Pick a photo at random, allow yourself 1 minute to study the picture and put back in the box. Describe or illustrate the features of that person from memory.

Tray Of Objects

Put 10 – 20 objects on a tray and cover with a cloth. Remove the cloth and view the objects for 1 minute. Cover again and try to list all of the objects.

BOOK REVIEW

Build Your Own Spy Scope

By Shar Levine and Leslie Johnstone

This spy scope comprises a sensitive amplifier microphone (electronic components are connected to a circuit board) and a periscope for enhanced vision. A booklet is included in the kit and it explains well and in detail the science involved, how to put the parts together and general information about spy devices and spying. It is suitable for ages 8 and above.
Silver Dolphin, C/-Bookwise International, PO Box 2164, Regency Park 5942. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP $29.95.

IN THE KITCHEN

You've worked hard all week on the farm, so when Sunday comes around, once you've collected the eggs, why not grab the paper, go back to bed and see if the significant other will whip you up some of these delicious brekky dishes.

GLUTEN-FREE PANCAKES

½ cup buckwheat flour
½ cup rice flour
1 tsp baking powder
pinch of salt
1 tbsp caster sugar
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 cup gluten-free soy milk
2 tbsp olive oil
125 g low-fat smooth ricotta cheese
125 ml maple syrup
200 g raspberries

Sift flours, baking powder and salt into a large bowl. Stir through sugar. Combine egg, milk and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a jug. Whisk into flour. Rest for 20 minutes.

Heat remaining oil in a large frying pan. Drop 2 tablespoons of the batter into the frying pan. Cook until bubbles appear, turn and cook the other side.

Combine ricotta with a tablespoon of maple syrup in small bowl. Serve pancakes with ricotta mixture, remaining maple syrup and raspberries. Makes 10.

FETTA SCRAMBLED EGGS

4 eggs
⅓ cup milk
2 tbsp parsley and chives, finely chopped
80 g fetta, crumbled
20 g butter

Lightly beat eggs in a small bowl and whisk in milk and herbs. When combined stir through fetta. Melt butter in a saucepan over low heat, add egg mixture and stir over low heat until eggs are soft and fluffy. Serve immediately over toasted bread. Serves 4.

HIGH-FIBRE BANANA DRINK

2 cups pure orange juice, chilled
1 large banana, chopped
handful strawberries
¼ cup wheatgerm

Place ingredients in an electric blender and blend until smooth. Pour into glasses and serve.

SAUTÉED GARLIC MUSHROOMS

250 g small mushrooms
30 g butter
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 shallots
1 tbsp parsley, chopped

Trim stalks of mushrooms, then sauté mushrooms in hot butter and garlic until golden brown. Add finely chopped shallots and parsley, stir until combined. Serves 4.

POTATO ROSTI

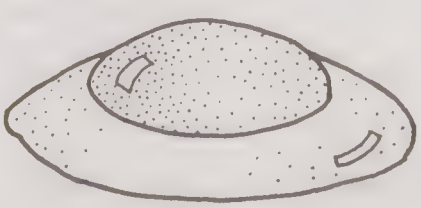
4 large Désirée potatoes
2 shallots, sliced
1 tbsp olive oil
2 tsp chopped rosemary
light olive oil, for frying

Peel and coarsely grate potatoes. Squeeze with your hands to remove excess moisture. Mix with shallots and rosemary and season well (especially with salt).

Heat oil in a large frying pan. Divide mixture into 4 patties. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes or until crisp and the potatoes have cooked through. Serve with eggs and bacon or drizzled with maple syrup. Serves 4.

FRESH FRUIT & GINGER SYRUP

fruit such as pineapple, melon, figs, black grapes, strawberries, mangoes. Try to include about 4 passionfruit for the syrup. Cut up enough to serve 4.
220 g caster sugar
250 ml water
1½ tbsp fresh ginger, chopped
2 cinnamon sticks
1 nutmeg, quartered



Combine sugar, water, ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg in pan. Stir over heat, without boiling, until sugar is dissolved, then simmer, uncovered, without stirring, for 2 minutes.

Remove pan from heat, cover and stand 10 minutes. Strain and discard ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Combine fruit in bowl, add warm ginger syrup, cover and refrigerate for several hours or until cold. Serves 4.

MUFFINS FLORENTINE

20 g butter
650 g (1 bunch) English spinach
2 tbsp cream
2 tsp seeded mustard
1 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
2 English-style muffins
4 eggs
paprika

Heat butter in pan, add spinach, cook, stirring, until just wilted. Drain liquid from pan. Add cream, mustard and parsley to pan and stir over heat until combined.

Split muffins in half, toast both sides. Poach eggs until cooked as desired. Top each muffin half with some of the spinach mixture and an egg, sprinkle with paprika. Serves 4.

EASY EGG BASKETS FOR KIDS

12 slices wholemeal bread, crusts removed
butter
12 x 45 g eggs
3 spring onions, chopped
1 tsp fresh thyme, chopped
1 cup grated Swiss cheese

Flatten each slice of bread with a rolling pin and spread both sides of bread with butter and press into muffin tins.

Crack an egg in the centre of each muffin bread case. Sprinkle with spring onion, thyme and cheese. Bake at 180° C for 20 minutes or until the egg has set. Makes 12.

Brilliant Breakfasts

by Deborah McDonnell, Walpeup, Vic.

Do you know how to make your own breakfasts? Or do you, like so many others, just pull a box of cereal out of the cupboard every morning? More and more people seem to be taking this quick solution, without a thought to the artificial colours, flavours and preservatives they're tipping into their bowls. I must admit, making your own corn flakes wouldn't exactly be a cinch. But what about porridge? Surely everybody must know how to make that. Imagine my horror when I saw that come out of a box too. The pale slop that resulted bore more resemblance to baby food than to oatmeal.

Breakfast is always an interesting affair around our household. The only cereals we buy are wheat biscuits, processed bran and rolled oats. The rest we make up ourselves. Here are some of our favourite brekkies, all simple, healthy and delicious. After all, since many claim that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, you might as well enjoy it.

PORRIDGE

2 cups rolled oats
2 cups milk
2 cups water
1 tsp salt, or to taste

Pour ingredients into a saucepan, place on stove and set the hotplate temperature not quite on full. Bring to the boil, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, then turn down till it's just bubbling. Cook till desired thickness (porridge sets a bit as it cools). You can usually check if it's done by placing the spoon on top and seeing whether the porridge covers it or not. If the spoon doesn't sink, it's done. If, like me, you like your porridge nice and thick, leave it to cool in your bowl awhile. It sets beautifully. Serves 4.

APPLES 'N' MILK

Dice up an apple into small chunks (Granny Smiths are good) and toss them into a bowl. Add milk to cover. This makes a lovely breakfast on its own, or you could try eating a piece of buttered bread with it. Alternatively, warm up some milk and dunk the bread in that.

RICE BREAKFAST

Brown rice makes a surprisingly good breakfast. Take 3/4 of a cup of cooked rice and add milk to cover, heated or cold. A little honey can be added for those with a sweet tooth. Or dice up a few slices of beetroot or a quarter of an avocado, mix with rice and enjoy.

CRUNCHY COMBO

Make up a mixture of your own favourite nuts, seeds and cereals. Keep it in a sealed container and every morning combine some with several tablespoons of yoghurt. This is a tasty way to incorporate any healthy supplements you require, such as linseed, dolomite or brewers' yeast. My mum mixes crushed wheat biscuits, chopped almonds, dolomite and brewers' yeast with her yoghurt.

MUESLI

Making up your own muesli is a simple enough process. Toss rolled oats and processed bran into a mixing bowl till you're satisfied with the ratio. Add chopped nuts, dried fruits and seeds to taste. Store in an airtight container. You might like to try adding fresh fruit to your bowl before you eat it.

MALTED MILK

Pour milk into a china mug and add 1 – 2 heaped teaspoons dried malt. Microwave on high for 1 minute, or till desired temperature. Give it a good stir, and enjoy. Alternatively, heat milk in a pan, pour into mug and stir in malt.

This is warm, frothy and delicious, the perfect drink for all those cold mornings.

Porridge Patter

by Kel Connell, Karuah, NSW.

What do you do with excess porridge, besides using it for anger therapy? I have taken the liberty of sharing some of my kitchen secrets.

If you have untouched leftover porridge still in the saucepan, you could add a little wholemeal flour and use it to thicken soup. I've added equal quantities of wholemeal plain flour and wholemeal self-raising flour, plus an egg and milk and a little honey or sugar, and *voila* – oatmeal pancakes. They are great with butter, honey topping, golden syrup, maple syrup, berry jam and cream. Don't stint on the egg; it's eggs that give pancakes the flavour.

Use the same recipe with a little melted butter added and some mixed dried fruit. Cook it in the oven in a patty cake dish and you have muffins. Eat them warm and buttered, or put a little cinnamon and cream on top.

Use the muffin mix with an el-cheapo cake mix (butter cake, banana or carrot cake mix), add an extra egg, grated carrot or mashed banana, berries in season, a little butter, some crushed pineapple pieces, enough fruit juice to mix to a dough (not orange juice), and honey instead of sugar. You will have enough dough mix for two nutritious cakes. Experiment with the mix until it's the correct texture – not too sloppy, not too stiff. I still check cakes with a straw. The bigger the cake tin the longer it takes to cook – a 20 centimetre diameter tin takes 35 to 40 minutes at 180° C. When the top is firm, push the straw in. If it comes out dry, it's cooked and can be put on a cooling tray. Two small cakes will cook quicker than one big cake.

I am an opportunistic cook and use whatever is available (within reason). If there is no mixed fruit, use dried fruit cut into small pieces and soaked. It will swell and when cut small will expand quicker. Or use fresh fruit – apple, plums, pears etc. I would simmer apples and pears before adding to cake mix as they would not soften inside the cake.

Icing is often not necessary. If in need of sweetness, add cream, or eat a slice of cake in a bowl with cream, ice cream or pineapple juice.

If you still have cake mix, batter or porridge left over, you've made far too much. Don't fret – preheat oven to 180° C, find a biscuit tray, smear butter over tray, sprinkle with flour. Using a spoon, drop dollops of mix onto tray and bake for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and turn, then bake for another 12 or 15 minutes. Biscuit should be firm, but not hard. Remember they are small, and will continue to cook in their stored heat, even on the cooling tray. Do not be tempted to use oil instead of butter to smear the tray, as biscuits will soak up the oil and the flavour will be affected.

My granny used to say: 'I couldn't start my day without my cuppa in the morning.' I say: 'I couldn't get started without my porridge. It's a good nutritious food and keeps me regular.' Have you thought about making the old porridge more tasty? When I buy a bag of oats all I need to do is add water and I gets 2½ times as much food. If I soak the oats overnight, the oats absorb the water and cook quicker, saving gas or electricity, and it's more digestible. Sometimes I add wheat bran, oat bran or barley bran (just a wee soup spoon). Another flavour trick is to add a small amount of milk just before all the water is absorbed. This milk is absorbed into the oats, improving the flavour. Honey can be added at this time, or golden syrup, depending on taste. Sometimes I add a dessertspoon of peanut butter, or even crushed nuts to give the porridge a nutty flavour.

Mashed banana can also be mixed in to add to the nutty flavour. Banana and peanuts complement each other in flavour and are used together quite often in cooking in Ghana, West Africa. Alternatively, sliced banana pieces, cooked apple pieces, pineapple pieces or berries could be put in a bowl just before pouring in the porridge.

I have not mentioned vanilla flavouring. In France vanilla is considered an aphrodisiac and is used extensively in cooking. When an aphrodisiac is given to children, with their small volume of blood, their bodies react as to any stimulant, and they may become hyperactive. They often love the flavour, but if your child is prone to hyperactivity or just acts naughty for no apparent reason, vanilla might be the reason, or one of many reasons. You might wish to consider an alternative flavour or a fruit juice.

Couldn't finish your breakfast and have half-eaten stuff left in the bowl? Ducks will love it as they go for wet feed, but the farmyard hens probably won't say no either. Not too much; they're better with grain. Really, there is no end to the uses for excess porridge.

Shedding Some Light On Windows

by Cameron Buchanan, Rosebud, Vic.

The practical function of windows is to admit light and air indoors. To maintain standards of health and amenity the minimum size of windows is controlled by law. Once this standard has been met in the planning of a house windows are often accepted as being incidental to building, without much thought being given to choosing particular types and sizes in specific situations. Demands of styling or the obtaining of a view are often the only criteria, but there are many other factors to consider when purchasing or replacing windows.

SECOND-HAND WINDOWS

Used windows might appear to be a cost-effective choice for owner builders, but there are many negatives. The window might not fit the cavity left by the old window or it might be too large; either way the solution is not simple.

If the new window is too big, the opening must be increased. You will more than likely have to move the window studs to increase the width and/or remove and replace the window lintel to increase the height. The window lintel is a large timber member that sits above the window frame and supports the ceiling load in that particular area, as there is no wall. Removing this lintel or reducing its size to fit a new window is not recommended. The modification or adjustment of a frame can create a weak point, which could cause numerous problems – one being the plaster cracking inside the house. Lintel sizes are calculated according to the opening size and the load above, perhaps a second storey or a tiled roof.

The installation of a smaller window than the one that was removed will mean having to join and make good the veneer on the exterior of the dwelling as well as the interior. The items involved in the refit might include weatherboards, brickwork, plaster, architrave, skirting and trying to match paint. The services of tradespeople could also be required.

On the other hand buying second-hand windows before starting construction can be very cost effective if the structure is built around the window sizes. Second-hand windows can add character to a mudbrick home.

NEW WINDOWS

The range of styles and quality in new windows is large, though the choice of materials is limited. The budget and most popular choice in new homes is coloured aluminium with a meranti timber frame. These windows are good quality, low in maintenance and reasonably priced. Meranti is a water-resistant timber that is suitable for windows.

All-aluminium powder-coated windows are very popular because there is no maintenance, durability is very good and they never jamb or stick. On the down side, the surroundings might not suit the look of aluminium.

Western red cedar window frames are considered the best as this timber, grown in areas of high rainfall, is resilient in wet conditions. It is a softwood, so care must be taken during installation and when placing heavy objects on the sills. Maintenance is moderately low, but the cost is high.

GLAZING

There are choices to be made in the glazing of windows as well. You might want to consider double-glazing with the two panes sealed together, or with an adjustable shade between the two panes. Think carefully; double-glazed windows are very good noise insulators, but the cost can be almost double that of single panes.

Safety glass is mandatory on some types of windows, but many window

manufacturers will install safety glass if instructed to do so.

Condensation

Window glass, because of its direct contact with outside air, will be colder in winter than most other surfaces indoors. Condensation on the inside surfaces of windows is to be expected.

ENERGY RATING

The window energy rating scheme ranks residential windows for their energy performance in typical housing anywhere in Australia. Windows, both glazing and frame, are rated for their energy and comfort impact on the whole house.

The label is easy to understand and gives a star rating of one to five, the more stars the more energy efficient the window. Heating performance is shown in red, cooling in blue. The sticker also shows how much the window will reduce the energy used for heating and cooling the home.

NOISE

Windows can be a chief point of entry for noise, even when closed. Louvre windows in particular are renowned for noise leakage. Badly fitting windows or doors will result in additional noise.

WEATHER TIGHTNESS

Poorly fitting window sashes allow air and water leakage unless the window is adequately flashed and sealed to prevent wind-driven rain. Flashing windows on the top, bottom and both sides prior to installation will stop leakage, but must be done correctly.

TYPES OF WINDOWS

Types of windows include awning, casement, double-hung, louvred, pivoted and sliding. Of these, the double-hung, louvred and sliding types are the most difficult to make weather tight.

Most types of windows obstruct up to half of the framed opening. Awning, casement and louvre types offer the highest proportion of free airway when opened. This factor can be important, especially in humid areas.

INTERNAL SHADES

Internal shades, preferably light coloured, should also be considered. However, once the sunshine has passed through window glass the solar heat that is not reflected outside by the internal shade is trapped in the room; thus the window now becomes a barrier stopping the heat from escaping. An alternative is to consider external shades or shrubs that will filter the sun's heat.

SAFETY

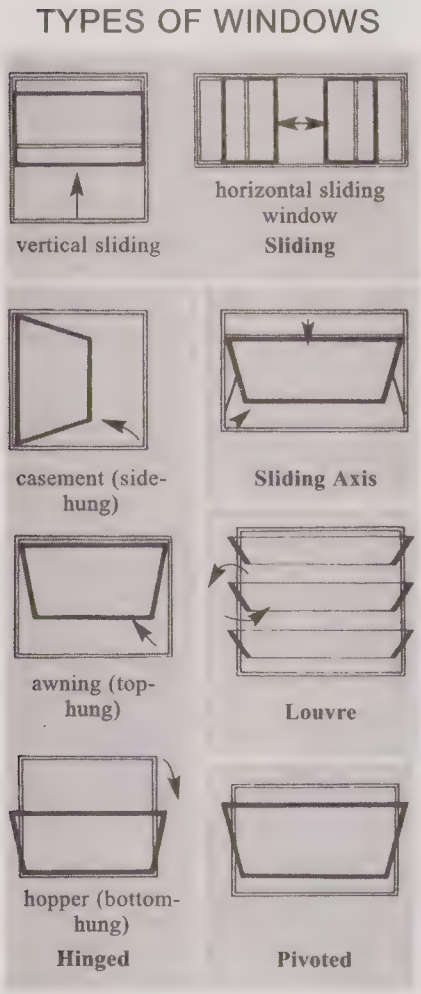
One of the biggest causes of workplace accidents in Australia is the misuse of power tools or using the wrong tool for the job. It is extremely important that you read the operating instructions and are familiar with your tools' features before work begins. Never use a tool as a substitution for another and don't overestimate your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety equipment and never be complacent.

WINDOW SHOPPING

All the above factors must be considered when either purchasing or installing windows. Second-hand windows might not be as cost effective as they appear at first glance when the labour involved in reframing and other alterations is taken into account. Window companies these days are very competitive and most are quite prepared to measure and quote for free. The accuracy of their measurements is always very good, but I have found some installation prices to be exorbitant.

Special care should be taken with installation in areas with high rainfall.

Careful thought should also be given before a window size is increased larger than is functionally necessary because this could introduce correspondingly larger problems such as excessive summer heating, winter cooling, noise, or too much early morning light.



Living On The Cheap

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

For years Roberino has amazed and educated us with his recycling ideas, but there's more to the recycling guru than 101 ways with empty milk cartons.

The cost of living seems to be constantly increasing and we are always looking for ways to live more economically. It's all too easy to overspend on a visit to the supermarket, but with some simple guidelines to follow you can eat well and make huge savings. You might be surprised, too, at all the sneaky little ways you can save on your power bills. I'm sure you'll be able to think of more savings than I have suggested once you get started.

FOOD SHOPPING

To begin with, make a list of necessities, items you can't live without, and be strict with yourself about keeping to it. With the money you save you will be able to reward yourself with a small treat and put some cash towards one of your major goals.

Shop at a vegetable supermarket before you go anywhere else and choose fresh fruits and vegetables in season; this will save money and keep obesity at bay. I work on a maximum of $7 per kilogram for any food. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and reducing meat and processed foods will keep you healthier and wealthier. There are many cookbooks in your local library filled with tasty recipes for those who are unused to eating many vegetables. Many claim that raw fruits and vegetables are better for your health than cooked foods; better health equals fewer medical expenses, another saving. In addition, the more foods you eat raw, the less cooking fuel you have to pay for.

There are often remarkable bargains to be had at the supermarket. I recently came across a trolley loaded with slightly ugly vegies and fruit at half price or less. Some huge bunches of frost-browned spinach were $1 each, but only a couple of the outer leaves were affected. Spotty tomatoes, ideal for sauces and Mediterranean dishes, were $1 a kilogram. Some wrinkly mushrooms were $2 a kilogram. Someone had possibly played tennis with the apples, oranges and mandarins, but at a quarter the price I didn't care; I knew I could rescue enough to make the purchase worthwhile. For $8 I bought a carton of very usable food.

Back home, I trimmed the stalk ends of the bunched spinach and stood it in a saucepan containing several centimetres of cold water with a little sugar stirred in. By morning it looked like new. The tomatoes, although slightly soft, were okay in the fridge for a few days until use – at least they were ripe and flavoursome. The mushrooms were lightly sprayed with water and in half an hour they looked perfect.

The local bakery is often good for a large bag of day-old bread, cakes, buns, pizza slices and pies. The $3 I pay is a bargain once the food is resurrected. Any I can't use, I give to friends. Snobbies might frown on this sort of economising, but they probably have more money than I do.

I rejuvenate the bread by spraying it with a fine mist of water then warming it in the oven. Pies and pizza slices I wrap individually and freeze, then heat them in the microwave when I want to use them. Some might say that I'll poison myself one day. Well, it's been a long time coming. A sensible precaution, of course, is not to leave food that contains meat or dairy products sitting around in the car or other warm place. Put it into a car fridge with a couple of ice bricks as soon as you buy it and refrigerate or freeze it as soon as you get home.

ENERGY USE

Electricity costs money and if we become aware of how to use it sparingly our planet will be happier, our bills will be less, and that will make us happier. It's a matter of a lot of little economies rather than one big saving.

The stove gobbles up energy, and so do heaters in winter and air conditioners in summer. Dressing in appropriate clothing can cut your power bills dramatically. Making cups of coffee or tea in the microwave instead of boiling the jug will reduce energy consumption. Many vegetables can be successfully cooked in the microwave without loss of flavour or nutrients – another money saver.

Develop a repertoire of one-pot meals. Not only are they energy efficient, but if you have a slow cooker or a pressure cooker, you can incorporate cheap cuts of meat that will be transformed into *haute cuisine*.

Cooking outside on an LPG barbecue might be more cost effective than using the electric stove inside, especially if it is an old inefficient stove. However, with the price of LPG these days, you would need to do a careful comparison to make sure this is so. Barbecues with a hinged lid that can be used like an oven are more fuel efficient than open barbecues.

Our hot water services are often set

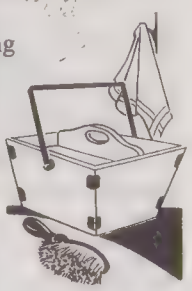
at too high a temperature so the water is scalding. This is a danger to young children as well as being an unnecessary expense. Kitchen sink hot water is frequently used more than needed. Use cold water to rinse dishes prior to washing and to wash vegetables and fruits. A solar hot water system is expensive to install but saves on fuel in the long term.

I sometimes see houses with lights on in the daytime, but no one is home, or pool pumps left running night and day. What *are* these people thinking?

INGENIOUS LIFESTYLES

If you think outside the square, you might be able to enjoy an ingenious and economical lifestyle, as some friends of mine did years ago. A large sailing catamaran with sleeping quarters, loos, bathrooms, kitchen and so on was about to be burned because it had been damaged in a storm and the wealthy owners did not want to 'waste time with it'. My friends could see a potential living cocoon right before their eyes and quickly talked the truck driver into dropping it off on a relative's bush acreage on the way to the scrap yard. They had visions of all that plastic resin burning and going into city air that lots of people had to breathe.

The cat was tucked away in a bushland corner and the bureaucratic killjoys never suspected that anyone would live in an old boat on dry land. Over the years my friends repaired the damaged hull and were lucky enough to see a suitable mast and sails advertised cheaply. After 10 years of landlubber living they had the boat moved to a mooring and continued living on it, even going on little trips using a motor. They eventually decided to see the Pacific and set off under sail. I received many postcards from idyllic locations.



Economical living need not be limiting, it can be liberating. Use your common sense and your imagination to make your dollars go further and enrich your life.

LADYBIRD, LADYBIRD

Ladybirds are on our side, you say. In fact, there are 260 species of ladybird in Australia, and, while some are effective predators of garden pests like aphids, others feed on vegetation and are pests themselves.

Potatoes are affected by the 28-spotted variety and pumpkins by the 26, so you may need to get your magnifying glass out and inspect just which type is frolicking in your garden. These leaf-eating varieties will also attack tomatoes, capsicums and cucurbits other than pumpkins. All development stages enjoy the underside of leaves, which will become paper thin and brown with holes. While adult and larvae of carnivorous ladybird species prey on small insects like mites and mealy bugs, sadly, they are mainly effective in summer, rather than in spring when aphids and mites are particularly a problem.

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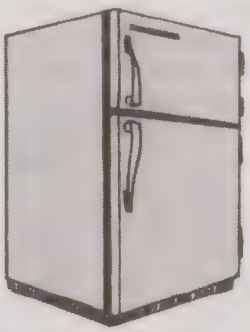

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Persevere With Persimmons

by Jane Smith, Kilsyth, Vic.

Eating tricky, furry tasting persimmons?
Easy, when you know how . . .

Outside a country town op shop that I recently walked past with friends, on a small table stood a bowl of beautiful, vibrantly coloured orange fruit.

'Persimmons free – please take one', was on a small hand-written sign, and a friend reached out and did just that. 'I've never eaten a persimmon before', she remarked, and was about to bite into it then and there when I stopped her. What I said was the reverse of what we hear often enough on television when somebody is about to do something tricky, like riding a bike along the roof ridge.

'Don't try it until you get home', I warned her. 'Because if you get the instant after-feeling that you've grown fur inside your mouth, you can go and clean your teeth, fast.'

'Fur – in my mouth?'

'Oh yeah, you bet!'

Tricky things, persimmons. I know there is a modern tree that produces fruit said to be free of this reaction, which comes if the fruit is not totally ripe and is eaten when still hard and astringent. But the fruit is not widely available, looks just the same as that of the older type of tree and is virtually impossible to pick by looking at the fruit alone.

The correct way of eating persimmons was a skill known to older and more experienced folk. The trick was to allow the picked fruit to ripen in the bowl until it was so soft that it felt ready to collapse into a jelly, not far short of going rotten. But then, ah then, you put the lovely ripened fruit upside down into a small bowl and cut it into four still-attached segments with a sharp fruit knife and opened it out like a fragrant flower. Only then could you spoon out the almost jam-like pulp and enjoy it in full confidence.

My friend took her free sample persimmon home to let it age, like a good wine she said. That way, she might enjoy the fruit enough to buy a whole lot more every year.

As a bonus, she enjoys painting in water colours too, and a bowl of persimmons makes a lovely still-life subject while it waits its time beside the vase of flowers on her sideboard.

HARVESTING PERSIMMONS

Persimmon trees are often found in older gardens and new owners are unsure of when to harvest the fruit or how to eat it. When fruit has reached its full deep colour it is time to pick it. At this stage it is still hard. Cut fruit from the tree with secateurs or sharp scissors. Store, one layer deep, in a cool place. At room temperature fruit will keep for two to four weeks. You can hasten the softening process by placing persimmons in a bag with a banana or an apple. In commercial production either ethyl alcohol or carbon dioxide is often used to remove astringency prior to sale.

Louis Glowinski, author of *Fruit Growing In Australia*, recommends the Flat Seedless variety for home gardens. It is highly productive, and the fruit has no astringency once soft.

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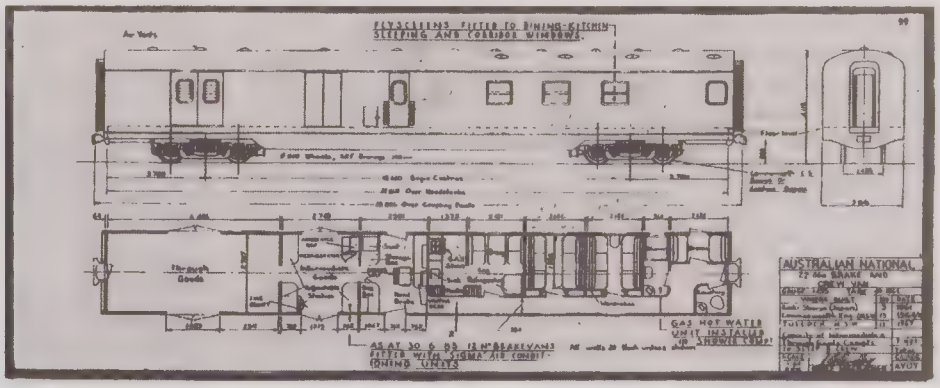
Home On The Train

by John May, McGraths Hill, NSW.

Ever wanted to be a train driver? John May has taken the common childhood fascination with trains to a whole new level – he's converting an old carriage into a home.


FLYSCREENS FITTED TO DINING-KITCHEN SLEEPING AND CORRIDOR WINDOWS.
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL
GAS HOT WATER UNIT INSTALLED IN SHOWER COMPT.

I recently acquired a 1961 brake and crew carriage built in Japan. The carriage is 23 by 2.9 metres and was originally designed as sleeping and living quarters for repair crews. It consisted of two four-bed sleeper cabins, a shower, a separate toilet, a reasonably equipped kitchenette with a table and seating area, a parcel storage compartment and a food storage area. I could see that with some work and imagination the carriage would make an affordable, unusual and comfortable home.

This carriage travelled across the Nullabor to Western Australia, through the centre of Australia to Alice Springs and around Australia and is one of only eight built for use in Australia.

To date I have replaced the original windows and doors and added security flyscreens. The steel doors on one side of the parcel storage compartment have been removed and replaced with a double window. The steel doors on both sides of the food storage area have been filled in and two new windows have been installed. Two walls have also been removed so as to enlarge the area to provide a good-sized kitchen and eating area.

My first renovation of the four-bed sleeper cabins was to remove an internal wall between the sleeper and the existing kitchen area to create one master bedroom 2.4 by 6 metres. I'll leave the other sleeper in its original format and use it as a guest sleeping area.

I've replaced the original piping throughout the carriage with copper piping and installed a new drainage system, which I'll hook up to a new septic tank.

Renovation of the shower and toilet areas will include the installation of new tiling, inclusion of hot water and new vitreous ware. I also plan to create a laundry within the existing space used by the railway staff for seating when the carriage was in motion.

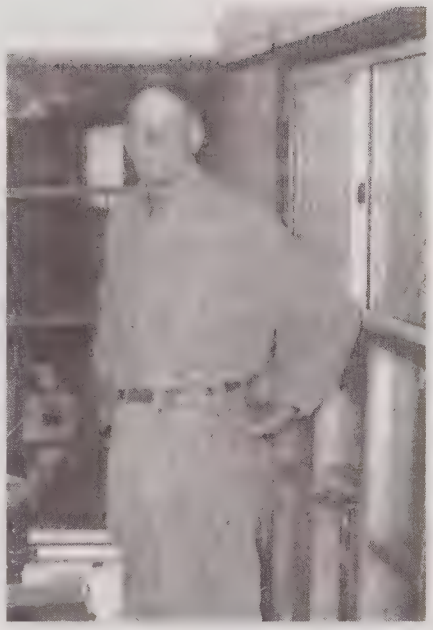
The first renovations were done at the property of a company called The Train Movers, from whom I bought the carriage. The carriage was then transported to my property at Gulgong by The Train Movers, using a crane and purpose-built rig.

Now the carriage is installed on site I can start work on further planned renovations. I intend to completely line

the interior with a combination of wood and Masonite to improve insulation, add a verandah on both sides of the carriage for shade during the summer months, and extend the verandah roof over the entire carriage to provide further insulation during all seasons.

The entire exterior of the carriage will be repainted in its original colours to provide further protection to its structure and the interior will be redecorated in keeping with its history. I'll install an open fireplace in the lounge area, which I'll create from the original parcel storage area. This room and the new kitchen will combine into an open plan living area with access to the future verandah.

We'll follow the progress of John's carriage conversion over the next few issues.



ABOUT THE CARRIAGE AVDP 120G

This is a brake van with sleeping accommodation, built by Kinki-Sharty of Japan. Each van provided sleeping accommodation for eight staff in four-berth compartments. There was a dining room and facilities for preparing meals, a gas refrigerator, shower and toilet. A separate compartment provided accommodation for drovers or other passengers.

Originally these vans were coded with HRD prefixes. The code of all brake vans was changed to conform to the Railways of Australia (ROA) organisation's new classification scheme in 1982. They resulted in HRD classification becoming AVDY.

In late 1987 the bogie (wheel) type changed from 'Y' to 'P' to allow for a change to the maximum speed limit to 115 km/hr for most brake vans. Thus the last letter of the most recent brake van was changed from AVDY to AVDP.

Timeline

17/5/1961: Entered service in South Australia.
29/4/1983: Recoded AVDY as part of the ROA brake van reclassification.
1987: Recoded to AVDP.
8/4/1998: Derelict at Stirling North and sold to a private owner later that year.

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Homemade Haybox Cooker

by Nevin Sweeney, St Clair, NSW.

I first heard about the concept of the haybox cooker, which uses stored heat to cook food, many years ago. I made one from a pine box lined with straw and used a large glass casserole dish as the food container, but it was not really successful. The main problem was that the casserole dish was too large so that you had to make too much food in one go. This did not leave space for enough insulation between the casserole and the side of the wooden box. So, until recently, I had gone without one of these useful devices.

A couple of years ago, while wandering through a neighbour's garage sale, I spied a large plastic Esky. It looked well used, but it was intact and BIG (590 x 370 x 420 millimetres). For the princely sum of $5 it was mine! To turn it into a haybox cooker, I needed to work out what cooking pots and what insulation material to use.

COOKING POTS

I decided that the size of the Esky would allow me to use two pots – a one-litre and a two-litre pot – so that I would have some flexibility depending on the number of people to be fed. The haybox cooker works most efficiently when the cooking pot is almost full of food.

Another way to improve heat retention is to ensure that the cooking pots have the least possible surface area for the volume contained. The most efficient shape for minimum surface area to volume is a sphere, which was geometrically inconvenient for my purposes. I settled on a couple of squat, dark-blue-enamelled steel billycans. The lids of the cans also have a rim, which ensures that condensation on the lid is returned to the pot.

The idea was that I could use my solar oven to heat up the food and then put it into the haybox cooker to complete the process. That was the theory and for the one-litre pot it worked fine. When it came to the two-litre pot, however, I found it was just a wee too big, and prevented the glass front of the solar cooker from entirely closing, which in turn let the heat out. Another fine theory blown to hell due to lack of attention to detail!

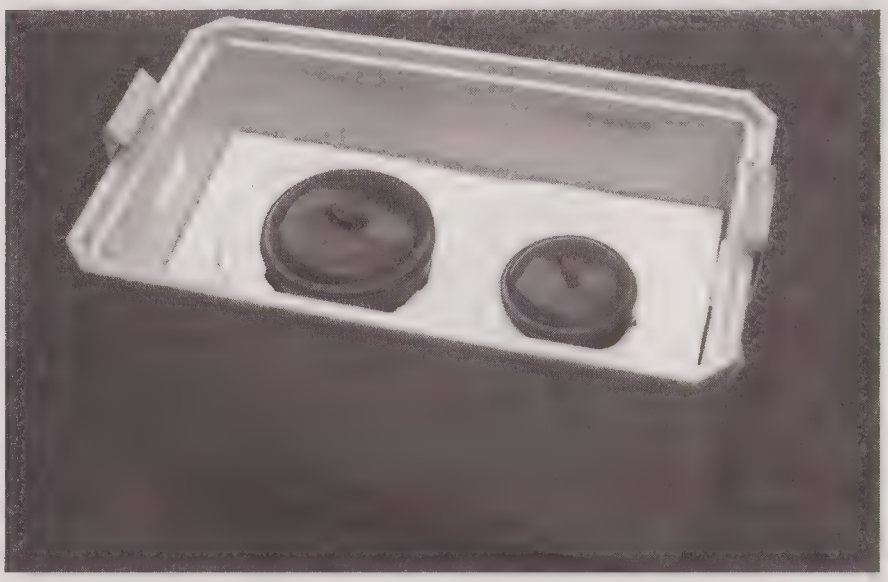
INSULATION

The obvious choice of insulation material was hay, but hay has some disadvantages: it is not as effective an insulator as some modern materials and it tends to absorb steam and odours during the cooking process, which leads to the growth of unwanted bugs. I wanted something that was light, low maintenance and an effective insulator. As luck would have it, a friend offered me an 1800- by 900-millimetre sheet of polystyrene foam that was 25 millimetres thick and had been used as packing in a container. I accepted it gratefully.

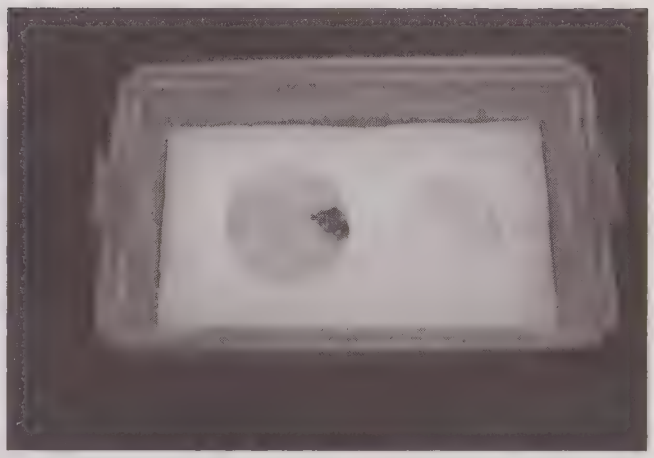
I needed to cut the foam to shape, but using a saw on polystyrene creates a hell of a mess with fine particles all over the place. Rather than do that, I looked around to see if I could get hold of hot wire cutter, which makes a nice smooth cut. After some searching, I found a reasonably priced ($25) battery-powered unit available from Hobbyco in the city (Sydney).

I cut two slabs to act as the bottom insulation and then a number of strips with holes in them to accept the cooking containers up to the level of their lids. Here my skills let me down! Carving the correct size and shape from rigid polystyrene foam to place over the tops of the cooking containers was beyond my technology. Remembering our family motto: 'When all else fails – cheat!' I bought some polystyrene beads, used for stuffing bean bags, and made up a cushion by loosely filling an old flannelette pillowcase. This sits neatly on top of the cooking containers and acts as an insulator. I sewed the pillowcase closed, because with anything less than an airtight seal the beans escape and get everywhere!

One problem with the Esky was that there is actually no insulation in the formed plastic top. I assume that the air gap in the lid is supposed to act as an insulator. I was not happy with this, so, using a cut-off funnel, I persuaded a whole stack of the polystyrene beans to go into a moulding hole in the top. That was one tedious job; the beans clearly did not want to go into the lid!



Nevin's haybox cooker, made from an old Esky and some polystyrene foam.



Anyway, once completed, I sealed the hole with an (unused) industrial ear plug. The haybox cooker was now completed.

OPERATION

The idea is to load up the cooking pot with your food in the same way you would a crockpot. This style of cooking lends itself to soups, stews and casseroles (that is, wet cooking), so if you are after dry or crisp, this is not the way to go. Having filled your pots with ingredients and water or stock up to about 25 millimetres from the top, put it on the stove and bring it to the boil. Cook for five minutes to get the heat into the centre of any larger lumps of ingredient. Once it has been boiling for five minutes, quickly transfer it to the haybox cooker, smooth down the insulating pillow and clamp on the lid. Leave everything undisturbed for 8 to 12 hours (No peeking!) and then open for a hot, deliciously cooked meal.

To test our haybox cooker, I filled both containers and boiled them, transferred them straight to the cooker and then sealed it up. Early the next day, about 10 hours later, the two-litre pot was still over 90° C and the one-litre pot was still above 85° C.

The haybox cooker has served us very well, particularly during winter. I even used it to make a batch of my beef and vegie soup, a family favourite. It still looks a bit basic and I want to make a nice wooden box to go around it so that it looks like a piece of furniture rather than the well-used Esky that it is – eventually!

The foam-filled insulation pillow, the foam inner lining, and some suitable pots to use.

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Storing The Harvest

Your crops of pumpkins, potatoes and onions have been bounteous and you're feeling justifiably proud of your gardening skills. Now how are you going to store these staples so they last you as long as possible? Fortunately for self-sufficiency gardeners, these three versatile vegies are among the longest keeping, if stored well.

Not everyone has a purpose-built cellar or space to build the ideal cool-room described by Neville Jackson in GR 166, or even grows enough vegies to justify such a structure. Don't think this means you have to give away a large portion of your harvest, or watch it slowly go bad because you can't use it quickly enough; there are many make-do storage options to ensure you will be eating good quality vegies months after the harvest.

Remember too, timing and method of harvest have a significant influence on the crop's storage life.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- The ideal storage location for most produce is dark, frost-free but constantly cool and slightly humid.
- There should be good air circulation, both in the storage area itself and around the produce.
- Don't store your vegies in solid plastic boxes or plastic bags.
- Check produce regularly and use or discard any that are showing signs of deterioration.
- Have a system that allows you to easily recognise and access food that has been stored the longest so it can be used before more recent arrivals.
- Ensure your storage area is insect and vermin proof.

ONIONS

Harvesting

When some of the onion tops are beginning to yellow, stop watering the crop. Tops will begin to dry and fall over; once this begins you can hasten the process by knocking the rest of the tops over. Leave for about two weeks before pulling – they should come out of the ground easily, if not, leave a while longer for the roots to die – this enhances keeping quality.

Once pulled out of the ground, leave your onions on a ventilated dry surface, such as a slatted wooden bench or chicken wire stretched over a frame, for about two weeks for the skins to harden. You don't want them in bright sunshine, but you do want good air circulation, and you definitely don't want them to get wet.

Storage

Choose only unblemished onions. Rub off loose skin and dirt and cut the tops off about two to three centimetres from the bulb, unless you are going to plait or tie them. Bulbs with a thin neck and flattened root end are said to keep the longest, so eat the thick-necked round-bottomed ones first.

If you cut the tops off, store in nets or pantyhose legs hung in a cold, dry, airy place, maybe from hooks in the ceiling of the garage or shed or inside a cool pantry. You might be able to sling nets between the rafters of a shed or garage to store them on.

If you left the tops on, plait them or string them together on a rope. These look very decorative and one hung in the kitchen will give you a convenient supply, but onions will not keep as long in a hot, steamy kitchen as those stored in a cooler, drier spot.

POTATOES

Harvesting

When you have determined, by a little bandicooting, that your spuds have reached the size you prefer to eat them at, give the crop a final generous watering. The tops will have flowered and probably be beginning to wilt by this stage. Two or three days later, cut the tops off at ground level. Remove the tops (haulms) from the bed to prevent diseases from coming into contact with the tubers.

Leave the spuds in the ground for up to two weeks to allow the skins to toughen.

Dig with a fork, starting from the outside of the hill or bed to minimise damage to tubers. Set aside damaged spuds to use quickly. Leave the spuds on the surface of the soil for about half a day to dry out. If it's raining, spread them out on thick layers of newspaper on the floor of the shed for a day.

Storage

Do not store damaged or blemished potatoes. Rub excess soil off tubers with gloved hands. Store in hessian or tough paper sacks or in newspaper-lined cardboard boxes in a dark, cool area, maybe under a bench in the shed or garage, under the bottom shelf of the pantry, or in a corner kitchen cupboard. Leave bags or boxes open for two days to allow excess moisture to escape, then close tightly to keep tubers dark.

As you use your spuds, discard any that have gone green.

PUMPKINS

Harvesting

Frost will damage pumkins still on the vine and they will quickly deteriorate. You need to judge the right time to harvest them to prevent frost damage. The pumpkins closest to the central root are the oldest and will store the longest. Cut fruit from the stems with sharp secateurs, leaving as long a stalk as you can. Stalks are brittle, so take care not to damage them or let them break off where they join the fruit.

Wipe excess dirt from skins and leave pumpkins in a well-ventilated, dry, sunny spot for the skins to harden. Do not let them be exposed to frost or rain.

Storage

Pumpkins don't need to be stored in as cool an area as other vegies (10 to 15° C is ideal), so will keep well in a spare pantry shelf or kitchen cupboard, perhaps not right at the top, though, where the hot air rises. Space constraints might dictate otherwise, but try not to have them touching. A net slung between garage or shed rafters is a good location.

Identify fruits from the ends of the vines with a felt-tipped marker and eat them first as they won't keep as long.

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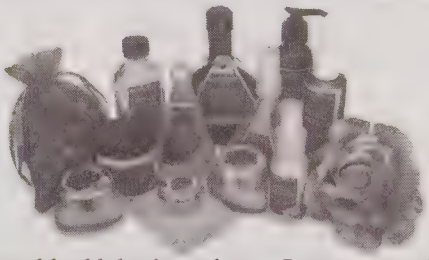

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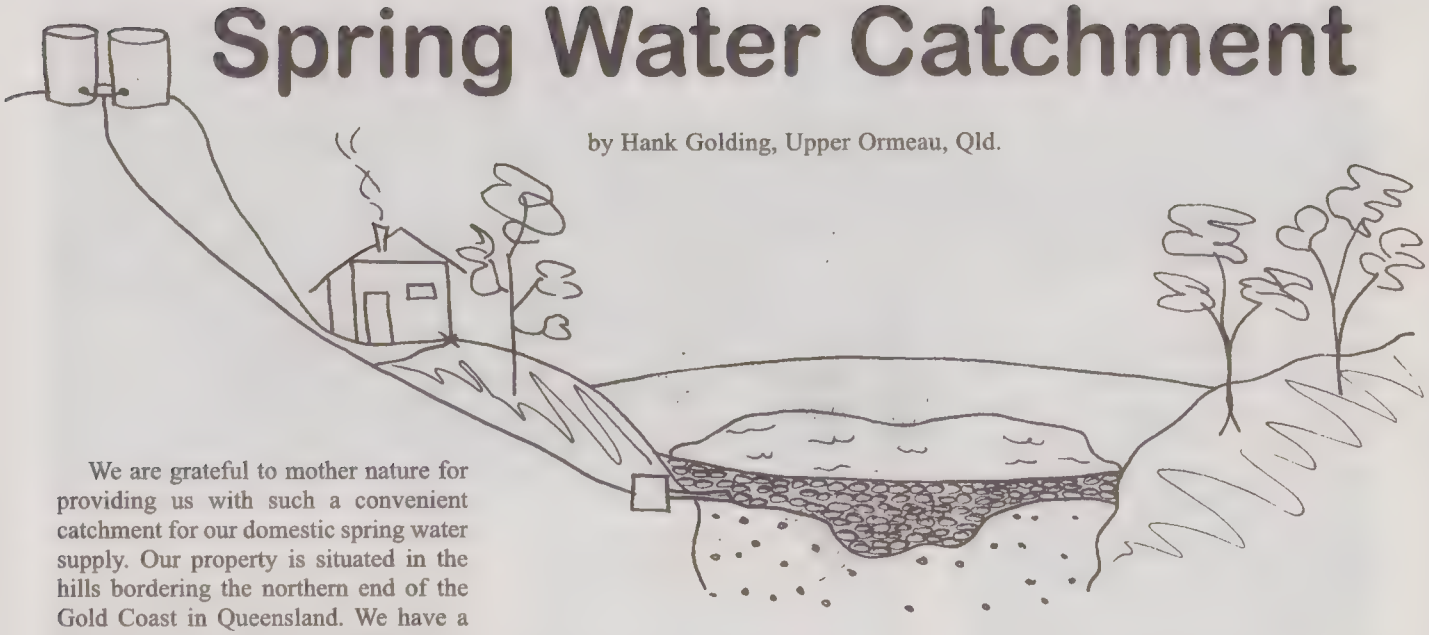

We are grateful to mother nature for providing us with such a convenient catchment for our domestic spring water supply. Our property is situated in the hills bordering the northern end of the Gold Coast in Queensland. We have a summer creek, which runs right through the middle of the property and flows throughout our rainy season of December to April. In the rainy season a huge amount of water rages through the valley, but during the dry season, May to November, there is not a trickle.

There are springs that appear in many different places on our property. However, our main spring water supply comes not down the summer creek, but at a 90° angle directly into the exposed bedrock section of the summer creek.

From where the water is drawn, I built a rock wall across the width of the bedrock in which to hold back the spring water. The average flow rate of 2000 litres a day is more than adequate for the domestic needs of our family of two adults and two young children.

From the pond I created, I use a 'fire-fighter' water pump (which is easily moved in times of flood) to pump up to header tanks, from where the water is then gravity fed down to the homestead. Plans are currently on the drawing board to eventually expand the whole water storage system. This has been prompted by the extended drought, which we are still experiencing at the time of writing this article, despite the heavy rainfalls earlier in the year that caused major flooding to many places in the Gold Coast region.

I use only one header tank at a time to safeguard against any mishaps, such as a burst pipe for example. Also, once a tank has been filled the sediment needs time to settle. A twin impeller water pump is powerful enough to suck up mud if you allow it.

At the beginning of each dry season, I pump the pond empty and clear out all the debris that has been washed down in the rainy season. I use a carbon filter for our drinking water. There are many water critters living in the pond (a sign that the water is in good condition), but the thought of drinking them is not an attractive one. The remainder of the domestic water is not filtered.

During the rainy season, I pump stormwater up to a header dam with a 40-metre head. The amount of water I pump depends on just how much petrol I can afford. The use of a ram pump for pumping stormwater would be ideal. The firefighter (Davey/Briggs & Stratton) water pump is quite economical, costing about $10 a year for petrol to pump our domestic water.

The suction pipe to the pump is 50-millimetre rural class 'B' polypipe, as are the delivery pipes to the header tanks and dam. The header tanks are at a 30-metre head from the homestead and the gravity-fed pressure is quite adequate. I have used the spring water for crop irrigation on many occasions. The vegetables appear more crisp and full of flavour than when I use water from the dam.

We are quite fortunate to have this spring. When our neighbours are having to buy in truckloads of water, we still have an adequate supply.

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Pinto Peanut
A Magic Green Carpet

by Jane 'Many Leaves' Lawrance, Babinda, Qld.

Back in GR 160, I wrote about perennial cover crops in the tropics, where I briefly mentioned pinto peanut. After growing and establishing our first orchard, I now want to share what I've learnt about this incredible legume. Pinto peanut needs a frost-free location. In the subtropics planting time is October to January. In the tropics plant during the wet season. Pinto peanut tolerates part shade, which is why it's ideally suited to orchards.

ESTABLISHMENT STAGE

Arachis pintoi is a perennial from the Leguminosae family. It has an energetic growth rate, running along the ground, putting down roots as it goes and protecting the soil with its wide, flat leaves. So, two years ago when we planted out a new orchard it seemed like an ideal ground cover.

We allowed ample room between the small trees so they would be able to reach their full size without having to compete for sunlight. Meanwhile, the weedy grasses soon took advantage of the improved growing conditions. Once the tedious job of weeding out the unwanted grasses was completed, I planted runners of pinto peanut, about 10 to 15 centimetres long at about 45-centimetre spacings, over the area. The runners had originally been obtained from a friend and were potted and protected from hungry chooks until I was ready to plant them.

Planting

It's best to plant just before rains, or, as I did, between the showers. I stripped the excess leaves from each runner and buried the stem in the soil, leaving only a small amount of the runner above ground.

I used the inoculant group P, strain NC92 to activate nitrogen fixation. My method of doing this was to mix the inoculant into some soil taken from around the newly planted runners and lightly sprinkle it over the planted area. If you are using pinto seeds, the recommended method is to dissolve the inoculant in water as instructed on the packet, throw in the correct amount of seed, stir until the seeds are wet and well coated, then sow them as soon as possible, within 24 hours.

The following year, having more new orchards to set up, I opted to purchase pinto seed, thinking it would be quicker and easier to establish this way. (I couldn't get enough pinto in my life!) The price per kilogram was staggering. I was advised to plant the seed as soon as possible because of its poor viability. However, the success rate was not very satisfying. Those seedlings that did germinate made delicate meals for furry nocturnal critters when my back was turned. Meanwhile, my tough, wiry runners were powering along, sending out new leaves. You can't escape work, but you can save money, I've learnt, by planting runners, if you have a suitable source.

During the establishment stage it's best to pull out the larger weeds because the young pintos can't compete, but once this is done you and your pintos are laughing.

SOIL TEMPERATURE AND BIOTA

In our first orchard there's now a lush green carpet protecting the soil from erosion and keeping moisture in. The soil underneath the thick layer of greenery is rich, friable, cool and moist; almost unbelievable when the sky is blue overhead and the midday sun is beating down. The fruit trees have a cool constant soil temperature and their feeder roots are protected by the dense carpet. There's less water runoff and nutrient leaching over the wet season, resulting in year-round better water absorption. There is a hectic underworld of creepy-crawlies busily assisting the soil and the trees with their biological activity and the yellow pea-like flowers attract beneficial insects.

TRUE SUSTAINABILITY

With the busy life we lead, pinto peanut has saved Andrew and me so much extra work. Now established, this super ground cover is looking after itself. Cyclone Grace dumped more than a metre of rain in 10 days, yet there was no evidence of any soil erosion. The few weeds that bravely germinate are weak and spindly and easily pulled out.

THE PLACE FOR PINTO

Due to its vigorous running habit, I've kept pinto out of the vegie gardens. You really have to seriously consider where to plant it, as you'll never get rid of it. There is a right and wrong place for this full-on South American runner. Orchards, erosion-prone areas, steep slopes, or maybe instead of that lawn, are ideal applications. If you can establish it in a chook run before the birds are introduced, there'll be fresh pickings of protein-rich leaves (with minerals and vitamins) and a smorgasbord of insects amidst the root systems.

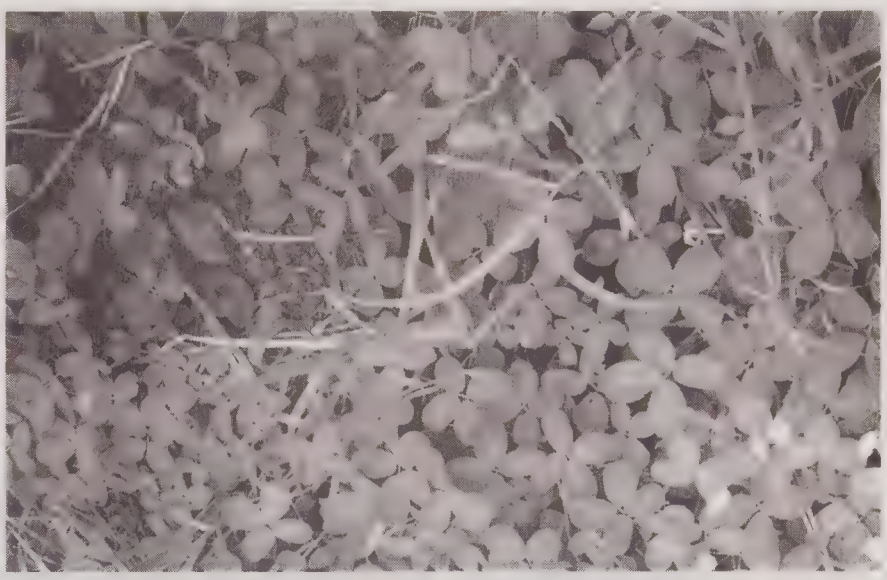
Our ongoing projects are a bamboo plot and two more orchards. With the help of WWOOFers these areas are currently being planted out with pinto runners so they'll eventually become truly self-sustaining food gardens with every single plant performing an important role.

EAT YOUR PINTO

It's not just the chooks that eat pinto. We can nibble on the young green leaves and the flowers. After flowering, the developing stem buries down about eight centimetres into the soil where a peanut forms on the end. You can then dig up small edible peanuts, but you've got to be keen! Some references I've read suggest that the small peanut-like seeds are not edible, while others clearly state that they are. I can only say that I've partaken heartily with no ill effects.

INOCULANTS

When planting leguminous green manure crops an inoculant is needed to ensure nitrogen fixation in small nodules on the roots. The inoculant is a strain of *Rhizobia* bacteria that seeds must be coated with and each legume needs a specific strain. Your seed supplier can advise you about this and supply the correct strain for your needs.



Pinto makes a hardy, multi-use ground cover, but not in the vegie garden.

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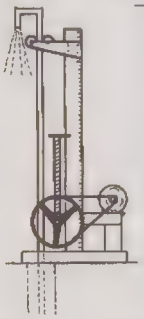

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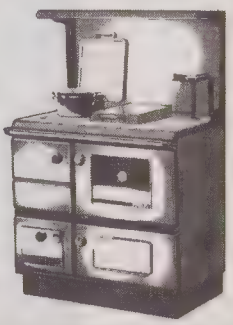

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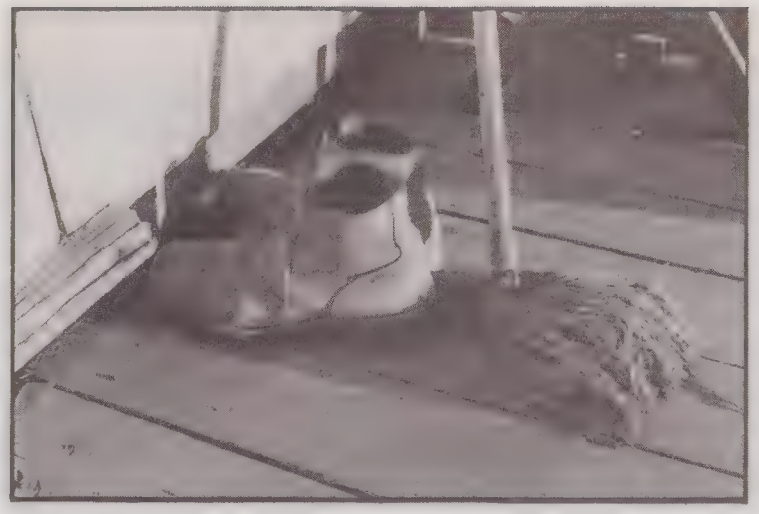


by Val Smetheram, Wishart, Qld.

Downsizing is a word we hear often these days. What is it? It all depends where you're coming from. For employers it usually means cutting staff. Employees groan, wondering whether the Damoclean sword will fall on them. For others approaching retirement it means getting rid of all the unnecessary clutter accumulated throughout the years of living in one place in order to make life simpler. The last, which comes closer to my point, is actually making the move out of town, taking that adventurous step into the delicious unknown.

Country living, if you've never done it, 'ain't easy' as an old country man told me once. Having grown up in a village, I know that old man was right. As emigrants from England in the mid-1960s, we moved onto acreage with no town water, no electricity and no public transport, and I discovered even more that it ain't easy. However, it can be a real challenge to your capabilities, and your resourcefulness can be stretched to breaking point. I lived on that acreage for 11 years and yes, I learnt a lot. I am grateful to have had that period of rural education.

Lack of water became a huge challenge, especially when later I had nappies to consider. Yes, odd though it may seem now, we mothers used cloth ones then. (One dozen saw me through two children.) Every drop of water was used as often as possible. All rinse water went on plants, vegetable cooking water too if it wasn't used to make gravy or soup. Pots of herbs were placed underneath hanging baskets so that the water, after refreshing the upper plant, drained through to the lower one. Washing dishes was a once-a-day job. Buckets were placed out on the grass at the mere suggestion of rain. We thought carefully before turning on a tap and no one ran the tap while cleaning their teeth. A curled-up hose in the sun heated the water within, sufficient for a bucket or half a bucket (depending on how many rings were left in the tank) for each person to wash in, then ended up on the garden. The years there gave me a great appreciation of H_2O, which I probably wouldn't have realised in any other way.

Energy was another matter. Having made sure the evening meal was cooked on a small burner (outside) and eaten before sunset, we found that half a dozen candles, although difficult for reading, proved adequate. The radio became our source of news and entertainment. Torches were kept handy in case the little ones cried in the night. I guess that period of my life could be called simple living through necessity.

My early years growing up in the English countryside were a good training for this. We children each had our jobs, and were expected to do them. From my earliest years I was always in the garden with my father in off-work, off-school time, so my main chore was to water and feed the ducks in the morning before school and collect the eggs and deliver them to my mother in the kitchen. This was not a hardship as I loved being outside, except in winter when the ice on the water holder had to be chipped off before you could refill it and the ducks were so hungry they nearly knocked you over to get at the feed bucket. Weather conditions here in Queensland are less severe, but each situation presents its difficulties.

They were hard times, but satisfying when a problem could be solved through your own efforts, empowering too. Because of those earlier experiences I can be content with a simpler life. My marriage partner and I find that the times we enjoy most are ones that cost little or nothing. Surely that has to be a positive spin-off from previous happenings that seemed grindingly hard at the time.

I count myself as a *Grass Roots* person, believing it's about working with the land and doing your best to take care of it, however small a patch you have at your disposal. Perhaps we were all meant to be in close contact with the earth. That's certainly when I feel happiest and most at peace and I think most GR people are like that. When I read of people living their whole lives in skyscrapers I get sick in the stomach. How much more of an unnatural life could a person have?

For years our work demanded that we live in suburbia in supplied houses, which could be frustrating for those with a gardening bent, as I discovered. It seemed a garden just got licked into shape and we were required to move again. Of course, the up side was the travel and you can't have everything. I certainly enjoyed and appreciated that.

In our own home in recent years, we've been able to plan and plant our very own garden area. A back large patio provides a relaxing spot to enjoy the trees and shrubs and the fresh air. Life can be pleasant, even if it's necessary to live near your work. It is possible, after all, to grow quite a lot in a small suburban plot and there are always country areas to escape to when you just must get away from the city. We've never lost our dream of 'a place in the country' though. Here's wishing the realisation of all those hopes of other would-be country dwellers out there.

Successful Lambing

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

In my region, when autumn leaves colour up and fall lambs start appearing on neighbouring properties. The locals join their ewes to lamb in late autumn, partly through tradition, but also in the hope of getting littlies on the ground and moving before cold weather strikes. A sudden nasty change can account for untold losses at the start of lambing.

When you think about it, the world is full of potential dangers if you're a newborn lamb. In past years, when sheep attracted a poor return, little was done about maximising lambing percentages. Now that all sheep are valuable, farmers are being encouraged to look at the factors that influence a healthy birth and successful weaning and to alter or improve any practices that could lead to avoidable losses. There are a number of areas to look at.

BREED OF EWE

The most numerous breed in Australia is the Merino, yet they don't have a great reputation for maternal properties. They tend to have single lambs and if the going is tough, as during the recent drought, the ewes will walk away from their lambs. It pays to keep in mind that generally they are run on poorish pasture and it's hard to make lots of milk on sparse rations, so the poor mothering might in part be environmentally driven. If your flock is predominantly Merino, you might consider joining them to a Border Leicester ram and producing first-cross ewes. These are better mothers, have more milk and are more protective – traits passed on from their sire, a recognised maternal breed.

British breeds, like many discussed already in *Grass Roots,* display excellent mothering as well as a tendency to produce multiple births. They are not usually run on the sparse country Merinos are, so they're better nourished and capable of producing ample milk.

There isn't a single superior breed with maternal traits, but advantages and disadvantages with all breeds and crosses. However, you can better manage a flock if you're aware of both the more and less desirable qualities of the breed. Don't forget too that maiden ewes, those on their first lamb, may be flighty and very easily disturbed, so children and dogs will need to be kept well away from lambing paddocks.

AMPLE FEED A MUST

Research has shown that ewes produce larger and increased numbers of lambs if they are at least condition score three when joined and at lambing. This is a change from previous thinking when ewes were kept leaner through restricted feeding. The offspring are superior to those from lean dams, with greater fertility and increased wool growth, plus they show better resistance to worms. Their lifetime performance, in other words, is better than in lambs from poorer nourished ewes.

One way to ensure ewes are heavy at joining is to wean lambs at 14 weeks. The latter would need supplementary feeding, which should be started while they're still on their mothers. It is believed that by that age lambs derive minimal value from milk so, if it's possible, it's sensible to wean them and allow ewes plenty of time to rebuild body resources in the months prior to joining.

RAM MANAGEMENT

Rams too need to be healthy and carrying ample condition. When you pay out good money for a ram, and many small farmers do, it's important he can work for a number of years in order to recoup your outlay. He must have good feet and legs, that is, be structurally sound, and be kept parasite free.

How many ewes can a ram cover? A number of variables are operative here, including age, breed and body condition, but many farmers expect their rams to cover 100 – 120 ewes. Never underestimate the stamina of a ram – one story, purportedly true, is that a Border Leicester ram was put in with 800 ewes and 784 tested pregnant! If the ewes are

fit and at condition score three, oestrus is strong and the job is easier for the ram. When oestrus is weaker, which it is when ewes are undernourished, the ratio should be reduced to 1:100 because of extra serving required from the ram.

PREDATOR CONTROL

Wild dogs, foxes and crows are going to be the major predators for lambs to contend with. If you have a small acreage close to town, it will be neighbours' dogs, not wild specimens, that cause losses. Favourable reports have come from using alpacas or a Maremma dog as stock guardians. If losses from dogs are a major issue, a stock guardian may be an appropriate solution. Maremmas, however, work by barking, so they won't win any friends if your area is closely settled. An alpaca wether would be eminently more suitable.

Foxes must be tackled and anyone with sheep should approach local farmers to see what is planned on a community level for eradication. Baiting needs to be carried out well before lambing occurs.

Crows or ravens are not as easy to get rid of. Offering ewes adequate shelter for lambing and having them in prime condition so lambs are strong and healthy will maximise lamb survival. Some people have had great success from hanging a black road kill, perhaps a currawong or magpie, from the branch of a tree in the lambing paddocks. The crows relocate for a week or two, giving weak lambs the opportunity to get up on their feet without having their eyes or tongue picked out.

SHELTER

Survivability is closely tied in with shelter: it's been found that mortalities with single lambs can be reduced from 17.5 percent to 8.5 percent and with twins from 51.3 percent to 38.8 percent. Both shelter belts and plantings for biodiversity will protect ewes and lambs from cold wind and driving rain. A nursery paddock, situated close to the house and planted out for lambing, is desirable, but if you can't offer that, some large bales of straw randomly placed around will be more effective than no shelter.

Don't overlook the fact that ewes need to be able to get away from the flock to select a birth site. If you crowd them into a small paddock or yard, this need may be compromised. When there is insufficient space lamb stealing or pirating occurs. Sheep due to give birth steal lambs and take them from their birth mother, only to reject them once their own offspring arrive. Observation and allowing plenty of room for ewes to find a private spot helps reduce this undesirable activity.

COLOSTRUM IS ESSENTIAL

The ewe's first milk after lambing is called colostrum and it's full of important antibodies that protect the lambs until their own immune systems can do it. It also kick-starts the lamb by flushing out the intestines, so to speak, and if newborns don't get a drink they invariably die. If you find a mismothered lamb, don't assume it has had a drink, make up the substitute and bottle-feed the lamb.

For homemade colostrum, mix up 55 millilitres of milk, one teaspoon of castor oil and one small egg. Give small amounts (about 60 grams) warmed up every two to three hours.

BIRTH BEHAVIOUR

Ewes are surprisingly speedy giving birth; the lamb is usually delivered within an hour. The days prior to this are more complex and demanding. Pregnant ewes must choose a birth site, an activity invoking much searching and even pawing of the ground. Once selected, the ewe becomes less agitated and will move away to graze, returning intermittently and wandering off again. The limits of the birth site are defined through urination and, when labour commences, mucus and the contents of the water bag.

In a highly charged, critical time, the birth site assists the ewe to focus attention where it's needed, on her newly born offspring. If, through some quirk of fate or bad management on her part, a lamb drops outside the site, rolls away or wanders off, the ewe has trouble recognising it as her own. The cues for relationship commence with the birth site, where a ewe will stay for up to six hours after lambing. Further bonding with her offspring occurs through recognising secretions and odour from the anal region and the flanks of the lamb. Voice recognition is a much later clue to relationship.

Understanding all this explains why a ewe will reject a lamb, clearly her own, that is found nearby – if it's not in the birth site she will be confused over its lineage. Should you want to foster, you'll have to convince the mother-to-be the orphan is hers. Baby powder on the woolly coats of both her natural offspring and the orphan mask some individual odours, but better results would probably be gained by gently rubbing their bottoms together. Hopefully, you will transfer all the necessary messages from one bottom to another.

Observe, but don't interfere during lambing unless absolutely necessary. Handling at this crucial time can lead to rejection of lambs, especially from maiden ewes. What you really want are ewes that stamp their feet and act protectively, even to humans. This maternal behaviour correlates to successful rearing of all offspring.

THE NEED TO FEED

Breathe a sigh of relief when the lambs are on the ground and running around, but don't forget the ewes will need to be well fed if they're raising twins and triplets. Lactating ewes benefit from pasture as well as hay and grain as it's high in protein and easily digestible. Set a paddock aside for lactating ewes so you can draft in the ewes and lambs and get them off to a good start. You'll get better value out of pasture if you have a couple of small paddocks that can be used in rotation.

WHAT'S ON

WORKING HORSES

If you're on the horse trail, drop in to Korumburra Working Horse and Tractor Rally, on 9 and 10 April, to see Clydesdales working the paddocks, a vintage tractor pull, an older style market with craft stalls, pioneer skills, horse and bullock teams working, and a blacksmith forging tools and implements. Blokes might enjoy the stationary engines and vintage cars and trucks (or prefer the bush cooking and Devonshire teas). No alcohol and no dogs. Held at Korumburra, South Gippsland Highway, Nyora. For information contact Allan Massoro 03-5659-6257 or 0407-862-775.

SAY CHEESE

If you like cheese, head to the Hunter Valley Gourmet Cheese Festival, held on 30 April and 1 May at Bachelors Terrace Vale Vinyard. As well as cheeses from more than 10 companies, there will be cooking and cheese making demonstrations, olive and wine masterclasses, organic produce, live music and much more. Admission and produce tastings are free – there's nothing cheesy about that. Transport throughout the district can be arranged through Hunter Valley Wine Country Tourism 02-4990-0900.

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Living in town? Pop into the Sustainable Urban Living Expo, in Warwick, Queensland. It's aimed at urban dwellers and small businesses and there'll be plenty of displays to get you informed and inspired. It's on 23 and 24 April at the Kingswood Camp Centre. For further details, contact Terry Cantrill on 07-4661-8148.

OUT OF THE WOODWORK

How does this sound – a weekend at a beautiful rural property to see demonstrations by woodturners and furniture restorers, and learn about the construction of houses and farm buildings since the early 1800s. Discover secrets of the past from a range of master tradespeople and get tips for old houses from experts. The weekend includes live music, house and garden tours, kids' activities, food and more. It's on 7 and 8 May at Rouse Hill Estate, NSW, free shuttle from Schofields train station. Cost is $12, contact 02-8239-2211.

WOOLLY DAY OUT

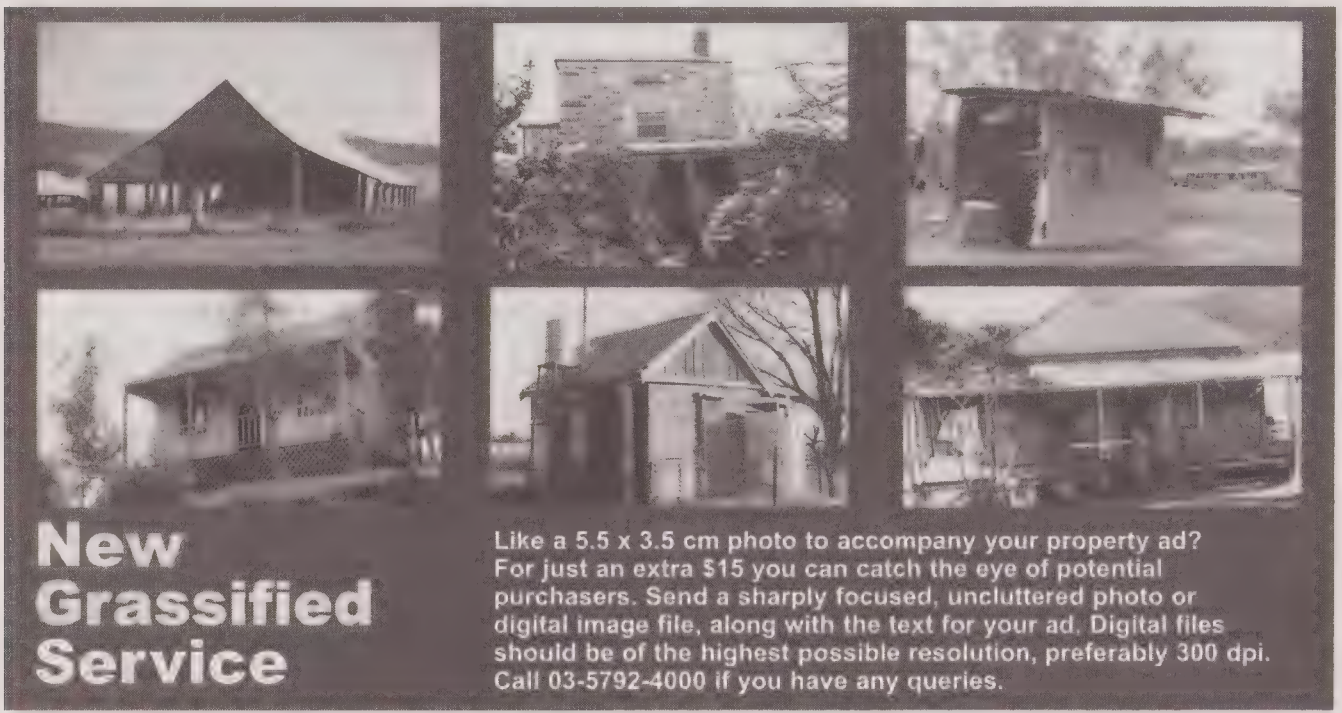
It's on again; the annual Sheep and Wool Fair at Benalla, Victoria, organised by the Strong Wool Breeders Association Inc. Watch sheep being judged, admire heritage breeds, and purchase wool and handcrafted items. A friendly fun day that's ideal for would-be sheep keepers. On Sunday 1 May, Benalla Showgrounds. Details from Secretary Greg Swift, 03-5768-2312.

ECO EXPO

Adelaide's inaugural ecolivingexpo is all set to help people embrace eco living, with all products and services on show having an environmental theme. There'll be everything from solar energy to green building and design to organic wine. It's on from 3 to 5 June, at the Royal Adelaide Showgrounds and is only $10. Visit: www.ecolivingexpo.com.au

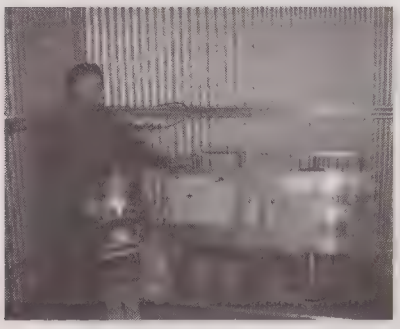
TASSIE CRAFT FAIR

Australia's leading craft and quilt fair will be held in Hobart this year, from 15 to 17 April. It will feature quilt competitions and displays, craft classes, and hard-to-find products. Call 02-9938-9938 for information.


New
Grassified
Service
Like a 5.5 x 3.5 cm photo to accompany your property ad? For just an extra $15 you can catch the eye of potential purchasers. Send a sharply focused, uncluttered photo or digital image file, along with the text for your ad. Digital files should be of the highest possible resolution, preferably 300 dpi. Call 03-5792-4000 if you have any queries.

ROUND THE MARKET PLACE

We hope you enjoy this feature introducing new products relevant to readers' lifestyles and interests.



WATER DESALINATORS

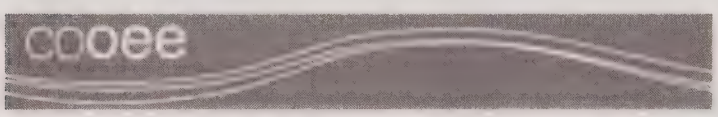
Sinking a bore can be an expensive and chancy business; if the costly drilling does find water, it's often too saline to be of much use. A company called Aqueous Solutions could have the solution to the problem with a range of desalinator units suitable for numerous applications – from 1000 litres per day for domestic and garden use to hundreds of thousands of litres for large-scale water-intensive farming operations. The units are strongly constructed, need only to be plugged into a standard 240-volt power outlet, and come premounted on a frame ready to be placed in the garden or shed. The desalination process is by reverse osmosis and fresh water can be produced from saline concentrations up to sea water concentration (50,000 EC). Little maintenance is required, but cleaning every three to six months is recommended. A water analysis is required (carried out free of cost by Aqueous Solutions) to assess the suitability of the bore water and the size of the unit needed.

For more details contact Mathew Harrison at Aqueous Solutions, PO Box 456, Newport 3015. Ph: 03-9399-1500, or visit the website: www.aqueoussolutions.com.au

COOEE

Queensland-based company Cooee Products manufactures a range of products that replace conventional, environmentally damaging chemicals. There's a sealant suitable for porous building materials such as concrete, bricks, tiles, sandstone, granite, marble and similar. Cooee Sealant inhibits mould, seals the material's surface to prevent moisture loss or gain, does not leach or evaporate, is not affected by UV light and highlights the natural texture of the surface. TimberTreat is a non-toxic oil-in-water emulsion that has recently been certified organic by BFA, the first timber treatment product to be so rated. TimberTreat is available in neutral and grey as well as five timber colours; it prevents splitting and cracking, wood rot, fungal growth, mould growth and termite attack, and the tinted products give UV protection. The waterproofing properties are a result of a new, water-insoluble quaternary ammonium compound, which causes the water on the timber surface to spread out, instead of beading, so it dries faster.

To find out more about these and other Cooee products call Ted Vicary on 07-5443-5888, or visit the website: www.cooeeproducts.com.au



SAFER HAIR COLOURING

NaturStyle manufactures a permanent hair colourant that contains no ammonia or resorcinal. It is naturally enriched with vegetable and plant complexes and offers a range of 30 colours, which can be combined to your personal requirements. A selection of complementary hair products for coloured hair includes shampoos for light or dark colours, conditioner and a restructuring hair mask. All ingredients are of the highest cosmetic quality and no animal testing has taken place in the manufacture. Products are available from most health food stores and selected pharmacies.

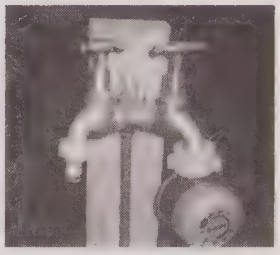
To find a distributor near you or for more details contact Natalie Eliovson, Brands Worldwide P/L, PO Box 1422, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355. Ph: 02-9693-6530, or visit the website: www.brandsworldwide.com.au

DRUG-FREE SLEEP

Countless people suffer from insomnia and while some of these are content, or desperate enough, to resort to pharmaceuticals to get a good night's sleep, numerous others endure restless nights and sleep deprivation. Help is at hand via the first ever mail order catalogue of drug-free products for insomniacs. Solutions offered run the gamut from a compatability blanket to homoeopathics, biochemics, tinctures, herbal remedies, Bach Flower remedies, relaxation CDs, oil blends, vaporisers, massage oils and fragrant sachets. If they don't help you sleep, at least you will feel satisfyingly pampered and might find yourself awake but relaxed rather than awake and stressed. Prices are compatible with those of many middle-range products and postage is a flat $6.60 Australia-wide.

To obtain a catalogue contact Sleepless No More P/L, 1358 Triamble Rd, Hargraves 2850. Ph: 02-6373-8636, or visit the website: www.sleeplessnomore.com

ADD-A-TAP



How often have you wished for a few extra taps around the place? Now you can turn single taps into doubles with a simple Y-connector. This sturdy brass fitting screws into the normal tap position and you can then screw on two taps at 45 and 135 degrees respectively, allowing you to use one tap for everyday hose use and leave the other connected to a permanent sprinkler or irrigation system, or, of course, any other double configuration that suits. Add-A-Tap is an Australian invention and available from Bunnings Warehouse for $9.95.

For more information call the inventor, Norm Ladson, on 0419-378-467, or email: norm@ladco.com.au

RECENT RELEASES

Titles described can be ordered through your nearest bookstore.

HAPPY FOR NO GOOD REASON
Swami Shankarananda

Swami Shankarananda is probably best known for being TV personality Gary McDonald's guru. McDonald confesses in the intro that after 20 years he still can't pronounce the Swarmi's name, but he has learnt methods of meditation that have helped him understand himself better and find some inner peace. The book covers using meditation to get in touch with your inner self and see your thoughts and motivations more clearly, and includes practical lessons like substituting positive thoughts for old negative patterns. It is made up of many short chapters, which makes it easy to digest each concept at a time. The Swami provides a guide to the path rather than 'the answer'. The book is inspiring, easy to follow and often humorous. The price includes a meditation CD to listen to.

P/b, 232pp, Shaktipat Press, 27 Tower Rd, Mt Eliza 3930. Ph: 03-9775-2568. RRP: $25.00.

NEW NATURAL PREGNANCY
Janet Balaskas

Pregnant? Thinking about it, perhaps? This revised edition of *Natural Pregnancy* will help you understand and take responsibility for your health during this exciting and taxing time. The book is a clear and practical guide to diet, lifestyle and exercise during pregnancy, with natural self-help treatments for all the common physical and emotional ailments that may arise. The holistic healing section explains what causes health problems and offers conventional cures as well as alternative ones, such as nutrition, reflexology, acupuncture, shiatsu, osteopathy, herbalism and more. The self-help ideas are very useful. A series of yoga exercises and massage techniques are illustrated, and there are some inspiring suggestions for mother and baby meditations.

P/b, 94pp, Gaia, c/- Bookwise International, 174 Cormack Rd, Wingfield 5013. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP: $22.95.

YOUR BRICK OVEN
Building It and Baking In It
Russell Jeavons

Russell Jeavons runs Russell's Pizza, the cult restaurant on the Fleurieu Peninsula, where he cooks entirely in the brick ovens he built himself. He reckons not a week goes by without a customer saying 'I want one of those in my backyard'. Russell's book explains the theory behind such cooking, how to build the base, dome, flue and insulation cavity and the best way to fire the oven. The second section of the book covers cooking in the oven, including how to prepare it beforehand, and a range of sweet and savoury recipes. Yes, pizza is in there, but so is baked snapper, and almond meringue. There are plenty of tips from an experienced hand and an approximate temperature chart. The book is illustrated with hand drawn structural diagrams and lovely duotype photos.

P/b, 84pp, Wakefield Press, Box 2266, Kent Town 5067. Ph: 08-8362-8800. RRP: $29.95.

GREAT GARDENS FOR KIDS
Clare Matthews

How would your kids enjoy growing a vine teepee, grass stools or a carnivorous bog? This book is full of terrific ways kids can enjoy themselves in the garden, from planting out fun beds to projects like tents, decks and sandpits. The book is well illustrated with bright step-by-step photos, so kids can help parents with projects (but perhaps not attempt them themselves without supervision). The projects range in difficulty from something as simple as a potted herb garden or a bird feeder, to making a playhouse, to constructing whole actual back gardens for kids to enjoy, including a mini pottager, a toddlers' deck and a jungle outpost. Finished projects are suitable for bubs right up to teenagers to enjoy and all sizes of gardens are catered for. There are also ideas for Easter egg hunts and Christmas and Halloween activities. Good fun.

P/b, 160pp, Hamlyn, c/- Bookwise International, 174 Cormack Rd, Wingfield 5013. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP: $24.95.

DOWN TO EARTH
Anne Scott-James

After a hot Australian summer, it can be refreshing to fantasise about an English garden with all that civilised English weather. If you are feeling this way, save yourself a plane fare and try this charming little book, which tells the story of the author's Berkshire Downs garden. Scott-James writes of her 'discoveries, prejudices, setbacks and delights' and shares ideas on designing, planting and growing, all in a friendly, straightforward, common-sense tone. Her comments on individual species of plants and how they have performed are interesting and wide ranging. The seasons may be upside down but the book is full of fascinating information. It has been illustrated with line drawings and includes a useful index.

H/b, 191pp, Frances Lincoln, c/- Bookwise International, 174 Cormack Rd, Wingfield 5013. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP: $37.95.

DOWN HOME ON THE FARM

by Suni Miller.

Hindsight is a terrible thing. Last issue we ran a story on snakebite and pets, which I read without a second thought. When would my cat encounter a snake? We had never seen one in all our time at Avers, nearly six years. Straight after the mag came out we had the Seymour Expo, which involved a weekend in the country, working the Grass Roots stall and catching up with all our readers who pop in each year to say hi and pick up a few back issues. I found myself saying to one that I could never contemplate living without my beloved Pablo, and how dreadful it would be if something happened to him. Did I jinx myself? I have to wonder.

Hours later, we packed up the stall and took David back to Avers with us for some extended chainsawing. The noise must have scared our little puss, as he wouldn't come out from under the house. We went off to the pub for a counter tea, and when we came back at dusk there was still no sign. I got the torch out and located him, but he would not come out. Most odd, as he does like his tucker. We spent much of the evening crouched in the bushes, half under the house, calling him and rattling cat bickies, then finally gave up and got into bed. There was a little mew at the window, and in he came, very late, very naughty, but seemingly normal.

In the morning, before I had even opened my eyes, Marcel said, 'There's something wrong with Pablo'.

I had a look. His back legs were paralysed, and his head was lolling forward. It had to be a snakebite. I'm afraid at that point I began to cry. Marcel told me not to leap to conclusions. I exhorted the puss to hang on and fight, then we hotted it into town, coffees left half drunk, to sit waiting in the car for the vet to open. After passing him on to veterinary care I felt quite confident. Cats were known to recover from snakebite. He was healthy and only five years old. He'd probably thought it was a hose and tried to lie against it, he was such a placid, friendly and, lets face it, not very savvy little puss.

We dropped in to see him on our way home from work. The vet had said they might keep him on a drip for five days, so it was going to be strange not having him around the house. The assistant said he seemed a little worse, but she had just changed his cage and he had weed on her. It sounded like my Pablo. When we went in to the back room, he was stretched out in the cage, his eyes glassy. When I put my hand on his soft little body, I knew that was it. He must have died just moments before.

What can I say? We were beside ourselves. We went home to an empty house to find no little puss at the front door waiting, cat hair all over the sofa, his bowl with a last few bickies, the cupboard full of his food and toys, all of it terribly quiet and still. I put his collar on the mantelpiece, cleaned and put away the bowls, vacuumed the couch and the favourite sunny windowsill, cleaned out the kitty litter, and threw out the food. Then I sat down and howled. It simply does not seem fair that a healthy, loving cat in his prime should not get a few more years to sleep away in our pot plants. He was such a good little cat; he followed us everywhere around the house, even sat with us in the toilet, and five minutes after one of us stood on his foot (he always ran underfoot) he would be purring on our laps. Our lives revolved around his routine, starting from that first meow in the morning, about 20 precious minutes before my alarm was due to go off. Megg and David buried him for us at Avers, and Megg kindly planted a cat mint on the spot. Marcel keeps saying to me, 'Are you fighting? Are you winning?' and I suppose I am, but I reserve the right to be maudlin about my Pablo for a little while yet.

It was sobering to discover that we had been scrabbling around in bushes only metres away from what proved to be a brown snake. I suppose we were lucky not to get bitten. I blame the timely appearance of our first snake on the recent floods. The whole street at Avers had been under water, including our place, quite a sight let me tell you. I always like rain, but seeing the contents of 50 years of junk from under the house washed into my flower beds was just too much. To top it off, two of our lovely old gum trees fell, the only ones to do so in town. One uprooted itself over the fence, spitting the fence post neatly in half from the pressure on the wires. The other broke apart and dropped 10 metres of yellow gum into our orchard, missing every single tree, luckily.

Marcel and I were just not set up to deal with that extent of trunk and branch. We scratched our heads, and walked around the mess, then looked at our modest axe and even more modest plug-in tree trimmer. Then we called David. 'Can we borrow the chainsaw?' I asked. I saw Marcel go white at the word, and shuddered myself. Chainsaws represented a level of handiness neither of us had ever aspired to. How hard can it be, I wondered. I asked a few people who dropped in at the expo and for every hardy soul who said, 'Oh, they're fine, just keep both hands on and your legs braced and you'll have no trouble', there was another couple who shook their heads, looked us over and told us terrible tales of not being able to work the safety switch or, worse, stories of neighbours with missing hands and feet. 'Don't hold it between your legs,' was another pithy piece of advice. By this stage my head was ringing. When David turned up I said, 'What are you doing

for the next little bit?' 'Doing?' he said. 'What do you think I'm doing. You don't think I'd drive away and let you two handle my Stihl? Good grief. Now step aside and let me have a look at these trees.' Marcel and I just about keeled into each other's arms. 'No problem, we'll carry the wood,' we said, giddy with relief. We now have not one but three woodpiles, curing away nicely, and no doubt harbouring any number of snakes, but what joy, an endless supply of firewood. As it has been the coldest summer in my living memory, we could just about start burning it now.

Seymour Expo time is tank time, and since our last tank has been such a raging success – not only is it full, but the stand is still upright despite the floods – we decided to lash out and buy a tank for the shed. Yes, we are now a two-tank family, surely a cut above! It's a pity it'll arrive after all the rain, no doubt our full complement for the year. Why is it that a good bout of rain inspires you to buy a tank, then it doesn't arrive until three months later, when there isn't a sniff of the stuff about? Despite the available wood, we agreed to go for a sand base this time. After all, there is no way putting some sand down can take six months. Is there?

I'm not sure if it was inspired by all the farming accessories at the expo, or just an effort to cheer me up, but Marce has also started a watering system. Most people do this before they begin their garden, not years after. We do have one now, of sorts, just a connection to the tap, limited pressure, and eight reels of black polypipe running from here to Christmas that constantly get run over by the mower. There's still at least an hour of bucketing involved so I'm ready for an upgrade, even, thrill of thrills, a timer. We'll see how it goes, but with a snake possibly still lingering about it will be nice not to have to walk through all the long grass.

In more frivolous times Marcel came to be known to family and friends as 'Marcie Moo'. Naturally, then, the homemade beer could only be called the Moo Brew. We have just started Moo Brew number two, and I have to say number one was a raging success. In the early days, it tasted a little of banana, but this went away after a month, and what remained had a good body though a slightly inferior head. Most importantly, it tasted like beer. Brew two has gotten a little technical: Marce has changed the fermentable materials from all sugar to a combination of light malt, corn syrup and glucose. It looks pretty dark in the tub, so I hope we don't end up with stout or something ghastly like that. The last brew was a lot to live up to; I'm praying it wasn't beginners' luck. It's nice to hear the laundry bubbling away again.

So life is going on, but in truth, even the promise of fresh beer is no consolation. It hasn't stopped me looking back over the dreaded weekend and thinking about all the what-ifs that could have meant we'd still have Pablo. At the moment, the heart has gone out of our home without him, and I had expected him to be around for years yet, playing with our future children, part of the family. Growing up on a farm, you always know your pets are vulnerable. How can you protect them from everything? Still, I'm afraid right now even the beer just does not taste as good without the little puss purring on my lap.

PENPALS

Hello! My name is Ellen Turner. I am a 13-year-old girl. My interests include writing stories, riding motorbikes, skateboarding, listening to music, fantasy and dragons! My fave dog is a Chihuahua! I would like a penpal under 17 please.

Ellen Turner (168)
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661

I am a 42-year-old female living in rural Victoria. I am an enthusiastic artist/creative writer and am seeking friends with similar interests. Other interests include reading, natural health, birds (watching and painting pictures of) and my family. I will answer all letters.

Rosi,
PO Box 203, PINNAROO 5304.

Young 52-year-old male living on a bush property would like penpals with interests in organic farming and self-sufficiency. Please drop me a line.

Rolf,
Lancewood Park, DRILLHAM 4424.

GRASSIFIEDS

HOW TO ADVERTISE

Use the form provided below, or a separate sheet of paper, to print your advertisement clearly, **not in block capitals**, including correct punctuation. If you have more than one ad please print each one on a separate page. Remember to include an address or phone number in your advertisement. Count the number of words and multiply by 85 cents per word (phone number counted as one word) to work out the total cost of your advertisement. Send **with payment** to Grass Roots, PO Box 117, Seymour 3661, before the deadline and we'll include your advertisement in the next issue of Grass Roots. **Deadline for GR 169 is 28 April, 2005.** Please do not fax ads.

Sender's Name ..... For issues no/s .....

Address ..... Classification .....

..... Postcode ..... Cost .....

Cost for advertisements is 85c per word

PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

YOUNG SHIRE, NSW, 2 x 100 ac blocks. Block one: 2 b/r dwelling, solar/wind power, gas stove & fridge, s/c hot water, septic, ph, 30,000 gal tank water, dam, garage/workshop & lge greenhouse. $170,000. Block two: 18 x 9 m machinery shed, 10,000 gal tank water & c/van. $130,000. Both blocks are open woodland to tree-covered mountain. Abundant wildlife. Ph: 02-6383-7319 or 0409-837-311.

TRADITIONAL MUDBRICK HOUSE on a 54-ac wooded block with f/trees, olive trees & covered vegie garden, 30 km inland of Eden in the Towamba Valley. Good water system with 2 dams, 1 spring-fed. The house is fully plumbed with shower, bath, laundry & flush toilet. Solar elec & generator, solar hot water with wood burner back-up. Private sale. $220,000. Ph: 02-6496-7015.

MID NORTH COAST: Perfect weekender/hideaway. Cosy secluded tallow-wood cabin on 2 peaceful private picturesque ac. Phone, big concrete tank, huge c/port. Includes undivided share of 1100 tranquil uninhabited surrounding ac. Rainforest crks, rockpools, lofty ridge tracks. In 2 valleys. Backs onto remote, uniquely beautiful isolated state forest. Pristine water catchment, r/forest crk valley system. Very cheap rates. $55,500. Ph: 02-6564-2007.

RELAXED LIFESTYLE OR FARMSTAY, retreat, pony stud. Mains power, ph, 40.47 ha, magnif views, organic orchards & vegie garden, drip system throughout, ample water, 7 dams, 20,000 gal new tank to 1st home, 17,500 gal tank to 2nd home. First home: 5 b/rs & en suite, BIRs, ceiling fans, s/c stove. Second home: 4 b/rs, elec stove, reverse cycle air conditioner, lge wardrobes, gourmet cooker, wood-fuelled (Solarhart, lge). Large American-style barn & 3-bay machinery shed, stables & round yard. Valued $550,000 sell $480,000. Ph: 02-6734-2300.

PORT STEPHENS: Home among the gum trees at Salt Ash, just 30 km NE of Newcastle, 20 km to Nelson Bay. This newly renovated 3 b/r home sits on 2 bush ac, with abundant wildlife & wildflowers. Enjoy the peace & tranquillity of the bush & still be comfortable with combustion stove, air conditioning, timber kitchen with stainless steel appliances, lge workshop/studio, automatic irrigation of gardens & lawns. $440,000. Ph: Bob, 0428-682-034. Photos & details at: www.bobt.net/saltash

CANDELO – BEGA VALLEY: 5 b/r, 2 bathroom, nth facing house, total rebuild inside. On 2 ac with country outlook in the delightful village of Candelo. Wonderful community, Olympic swimming pool, 20 mins to beach, walk to school & shops. Very good soils, f/trees, fantastic potential, 3 approved building blocks. $368,000. Ph: 02-6494-2014, 0428-256-942.

NORTH-EAST FORESTS, NSW, 320 ac, 1 hr from Grafton, Lismore, Evans Head, 35 mins from Casino. No sprays or stock for 22 years. Natural tea tree, plenty of timber, abundant wildlife, lge forests all round. Large paddock in front of sound 3 b/r house with verandah. Huge shed, c/port, new studio. Tanks never empty, spring water holes, flowing crk on 1 boundary. Organic garden, all amenities. 'Great gifts of peace.' Retiring to NZ. $350,000. Pete: 02-6661-7976.

MORUYA, SOUTH COAST, pristine Deua River frontage, 40 ac, 10 ac fertile river flats, cleared, 30 ac forest. Two cabins, both solar power, wood stoves, ph, permaculture design, ½ ac fenced chook run & organic orchard, 40+ estab fruit/nut trees. Large shed, tractor, generator, pump. Dam, 40,000 lt r/w/tanks. National park surrounds, enormous variety of wildlife, birdwatchers' paradise. Quiet & private, 10 mins town. $345,000 ONO. Ph: 02-6492-0831. View at http://members.optusnet.com.au/~lilymoony/

TAMWORTH/GUNNEDAH: Plantations of trees for diverse income – Australian natives for floral work, olives & avocados (no insecticides necessary). Cattle grazing. Comfy homestead with extensive orchard. Cottage hideaway with inspiring views, river frontage, 300 ha. $820,000 ONO. Plant incl. Ph: Richard, 02-6743-1713.

TABULAM, NORTH NSW, 100 ac, state forest 2 sides, uncleared. $40,000. Bulldog Rock Rd. Ph: Bob, 02-6778-3132.

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

SOUTH COAST, TWO-BEDROOM CEDAR COTTAGE, passive solar, Fishermans Paradise lakeside village, tranquil outlook. $279,000 ONO. Acres swap with cash adjustment to our favour considered. Ph: 02-4456-5417.

BETWEEN EDEN & BOMBALA – 120 ac of bushland on a crk. Good soil, ample water, wildlife, seclusion. Close to beaches, nat pks. Reduced to $84,000. Details ph: 02-4784-1020.

QUEENSLAND

BOWEN, BEST OF BUSH AND BEACH, panoramic views, 7½ fertile ac (deceased estate), ex-organic fruit, vegetable, cut flower farm, 2 dams, 2 bores, coldroom, 3-bay shed, 2 unique, eccentric & beautiful dwellings. $425,000. Ph: 07-4785-2456. Email for photos at: benyta.elphinstone@asianaid.org.au

SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND, approx 315 ac. Rare opportunity, peaceful, ex-dairy land with spectacular views, partially cleared, numerous positions for your dream home site. Two rd access, sml crk, 25' c/van & Landcruiser ute on property. Reluctant sale. $305,000 ONO. Ph: 07-3818-0680 or email: lindyloo68@msn.com

TARA QUEENSLAND, 30 ac bush block, sml dam, power past front, 18 mins town. $20,000. Ph: 07-4157-6103.
Email: bolana@dodo.com.au

GREENMOUNT, TWENTY MINUTES TOOWOOMBA: 3 b/r house, fertile ⅓ ac. $155,000 or exchange Tasmania. Ph: 07-4697-1244.

NOOSA HINTERLAND, COMMERCIAL, picturesque colonial shop with original 2 b/r Queenslander. Private gardens on lge 741 m² of rare commercial land in the quaint village of Kin Kin – set to become Noosa's most exclusive valley. Perfect for eco-store/cafe, gallery/studio etc. $480,000. Email or phone Jasmin for more information. Ph: 07-5485-4110. Email: wwildwood@dodo.com.au

BUSH COTTAGE, estab peaceful, private 5-ac organic lifestyle 2½ hrs west Brisbane. 1892 schoolhouse with grapevine-covered verandahs 2 b/r, lge potbelly, crk frontage, water pumping rights, pump at windmill, 4 r/w/tanks. Sheds, corral, milking bails, stone sauna, mudbrick studio. Sound 4 b/r Queenslander, red cedar doors, on 8' stumps, workshop space, needs restoration. Large vegie, herb, flower gardens, olives, grapes, fruit, nut, date, ginko. Hundreds natives planted. Six paddocks. Rates c$400. Power, hot water, ph, septic. Bus; state, private & excel alternative school to year 12 at Warwick. Ride-on mower, chooks, beehive. $180,000. Ph: 07-4667-4700 after 8pm, or 03-6471-6462. Email: bushctge@halenet.com.au

DEADLINES: GR 169 – 28 APRIL
GR 170 – 30 JUNE

MOUNTAIN CABIN near Toowoomba, Qld: town water, power, insulated. 1000 m² block. $79,500. Ph: 0418-128-296, Ray White.

VICTORIA

FRENCH ISLAND – RARE OPPORTUNITY, home with well-estab garden on 2 ha of bushland with fresh-water spring. Four b/r, w/b house, gas stove/fridge/HWS, diesel generator set. Hastings 10 mins from ferry terminal. $249,000. Ph: Hendrik, 0410-415-515 (Peninsula Coast Real Estate).

PYRENEES REGION, 2 hrs from Melbourne. The region is becoming to Melbourne what the Hunter Valley is to Sydney. 293 ac, magnif views, located in the Pyrenees wine & olive district. Excellent water catchments, 6 dams, water quality records avail, ample gravel for rd construction, bush weekender complete with permit, 2 rooms, verandah, AGA stove. Ten paddocks well fenced, corridor. Plant inclusive, tractor, Yeoman's plough, slasher, hay feeder, Connor Shea off-set disc plough. Solar-electric fencing, solar water pump to all paddocks complete with troughs, full farm plan avail, contoured every 2 metres. 40 ac fenced off for habitat. $395,000. Ph: 03-5461-2896, mob 0428-546-128.

PYRENEES RANGES: 20 magic ac lost in the forest. Hut, w/tank, suit naturalist, naturist, wood carver, hideout or hideaway. $36,000. Ph: 03-5343-2597.

TALBOT, 10 mins Maryborough, 35 mins Ballarat. Delightful 3 or 4 b/r split level mudbrick home on approx 7 ac. Cottage garden, f/trees & huge shed. Will suit any gardening enterprise with rich volcanic soil & plenty of water (bore plus tanks). Property has abundant bird population & is home to the endangered legless lizard. $325,000 View: realestate.com.au no 7055124. Landmark R/E, 137 Gillies St Sth, BALLARAT. Ph: 03-5334-1030, 0409-886-492 AH.

INCLUDE A PHOTO
Cost is $15 for a 5.5 cm x 3.5 cm photo.
Phone 03-5792-4000 for more details.

WARBURTON/MILLGROVE, beautiful 3 b/r BV on 2 ac of natural bush forest, breathtaking views. $375,000 ONO. Details on www.owner.com.au property no 17456 or call 03-5966-5970, 0402-269-911.

EAST GIPPSLAND, EAGLE POINT: 11 km to Bairnsdale. Three b/r house in quiet village. Lake King rural outlook, gas or solid fuel heating, well lit, garage/studio + c/port. Established cottage garden, f/trees, vegies, chook run. Close to small school. $170,000. Ph: 03-5156-0917, 0438-003-751.

NORTH-WESTERN Victoria (Lake Powell), Murray Valley Highway, 115 km from Swan Hill & Mildura, Robinvale 15 mins drive, approx 5 hr drive to Melbourne & Adelaide: 290.4 ha of valuable primary production land, woodlands & bushland with perm Bonyaricall Crk fed by River Murray – irrigation/domestic water on 2 permits: 50 & 2.2 Mlt; 23.2 ha incl irrigated paddocks & dam; homestead – irrigated lawns, garden, f/trees, scenic private rd from highway to homestead, driving/walking track in bushland to Bonyaricall Crk pump station. Sunrise/sunset views from homestead with return verandah. Four b/r, BIRs; kitchen/family/dining; cosy sitting room; pantry/storeroom; formal lounge/dining with brick f/place, combustion fan-forced wood heater; bathroom, bath, shower alcove; lge laundry with built-in shelving, separate toilet; evaporative cooler, LPG gas heaters & hot water service. Electrical power from solar hybrid system – garage for inverter, batteries, panels (adj wooden shed for generator). Three lge capacity r/w/tanks & a river water storage tank. Two farm sheds, animal pen & small shed. A bushland covenant with Trust for Nature protects bushland, endangered, vulnerable/rare species of flora & fauna. Property bordered by state forest & private woodland, Murray Valley Highway divides frontage from Lakes Carpul & Powell. Primary production & eco-diversity potential: herbs; eucalypt plantation; endangered species seed collection/production; native flora production – bush flower essences/oils/crafts, honey; organic crops, figs, olives, carob, grapes etc. Ecotourism tours of bushland, rich early European & Aboriginal history. Price range $420,000 – $400,000. Call Anita or Peter: 03-5026-9467. More information at http://www.users.bigpond.com/clararogers or email: clararogers@bigpond.com

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PROPERTY FOR SALE

TASMANIA

THREE-BEDROOM BRICK HOUSE on 26 ac with picturesque valley views. Spring-fed dam, 5 paddocks, all watered, shed & stables. Landscaped gardens, f/trees, vegie garden, chook house. School bus, local store, c/van park, trout stream. Twenty mins from Ulverstone. Asking price $290,000 ONO. Ph: 03-6429-1340.

DO IT NOW!!! SELF-SUFFICIENCY PLUS fantastic ocean views overlooking Frederick Henry Bay, Tas: 100 m to safe sandy beach. Approximately ½ ac, 2 titles, f/fenced, elevated 9 yr old western red cedar home, 2 b/rs (BIRs), open plan living, modern kitchen, full length sunroom. Organic vegie garden, berries, f/trees, perm water from underground spring, pump & watering system for garden. Hothouse, chook house & run. Private BBQ area, c/port, sheds, w/shop with power. Sheltered microclimate, warmer than Hobart, 20 mins to airport, 35 mins to Hobart. $185,000 – $205,000. Photos avail. More info contact Debbie Rowlands: sorell@robertsre.com.au Roberts R/E.

YOUR OWN BAY ON BRUNY ISLAND (Tasmania), 10 mins from Alonnah (Bruny Island District School, shop, hotel, medical centre), only 35 mins to the ferry, 3 titles with over 1 km of waterfront in secluded bay facing the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. One title on 37 ac with open plan, spacious, double storey, timber house (220 sq m, solid Tas oak, celery top pine & myrtle) with solar greenhouse. Ten ac of fully fenced paddocks with pasture. The perfect family home or to use as your heart desires, this property lends itself to endless possibilities. Two adjoining titles of vacant land on 47 ac. Offers over $770,000 for the house on 37 ac, $400,000 for the 2 separate titles on 47 ac. Inquire directly with the owners, M&M Humair, ph: 03-6223-5515.
Visit: www.ithotline.com.au/forsale.asp

FOR RENT/CARETAKER WANTED

SNAKE VALLEY, SW VIC: Person wanted to share lge, lovely country home with single mum & preschooler. Own lounge & 2 b/rs avail. With chooks, ducks, vegies, fruit & milking goats. Suit single parent with 1 child. Close to school. $80 p/w. Ph: Jodie, 03-5344-9309.

PEKINA IN MID NORTH OF SA offers substantial delightful stone home with attached empty shop building. Orchard, bore, windmill, sheds, sml acreage incl. Well-maintained property. $150 p/w. Ph: 08-8658-1321.

MELROSE/FLINDERS RANGES, 2 – 3 b/r house, new kitchen. Grow own vegies/chooks/pets. Close to lovely community school. Suit young family. Ph: 08-8666-2132.

PLACING AN AD?
See page 75 for details

THREE-BEDROOM HOUSE, sml quiet coastal village in nat pk, 45 mins from Grafton, NSW. Solar power, r/water. $170 – $190 p/w. Ph: 0402-890-487.

SURVIVAL CHALLENGE, stay a week, month or year, help with projects. No rent, smoking or drugs. Comfortable rooms & facilities. Fresh food, craft studio, bush setting. Fruit & grape picking local Stanthorpe farms. Ph: 07-4684-5124 after 7pm.

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BUSH LOVERS: bush place wanted for family, quiet, clean & prepared to caretake. Quiet school ideal. Preferably North Grafton to Queensland border. Ph: 0438-777-696.

HARD-WORKING COUPLE 37 & 35 + obedient, envirofriendly dog seeking WWOOFing/caretaking/housesitting/work for accom on rural/remote properties. Preferably FNQ, NT, WA, Top End. Will consider anywhere. Please write or call Nick: 08-8568-5629. PO Box 56, BIRDWOOD, SA 5234.

SINGLE, MATURE, FIT WOMAN seeking self-contained accom in exchange for work. Currently studying correspondence horticulture. Interested in permaculture/organic farming situation in NSW. Please call 02-9371-1522 or email: orwlds@gmail.com

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http://www.momswin.com/phillipl/

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ANAHATA COMMUNITY, OUTSKIRTS OF AUCKLAND, New Zealand. Rural type environment near city amenities. New residents welcome. See: www.anahata.co.nz for details. Contact by email: inquiries@anahata.co.nz

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http://kookaburra.eco-village.com.au

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PROPERTY WANTED

NORTHERN TASMANIA, ACREAGE with running water preferred, cash or exchange 3 b/r house 20 mins from Toowoomba. Ph: 07-4697-1244.

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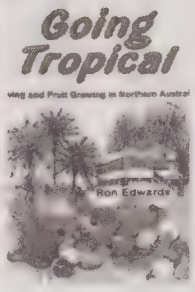

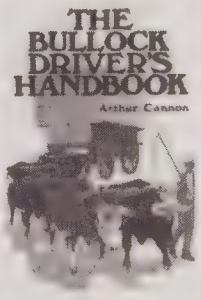

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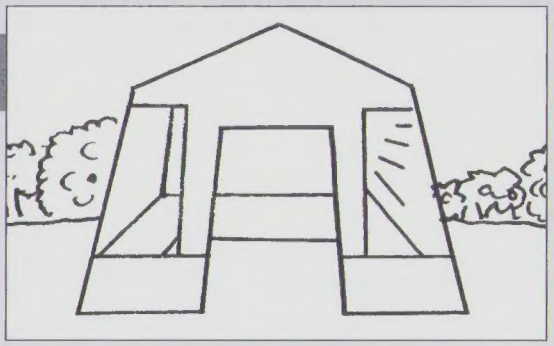

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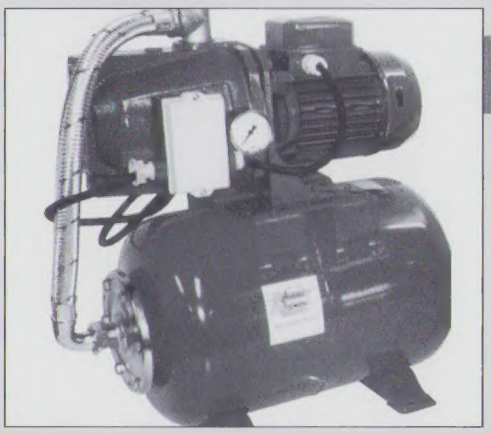

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